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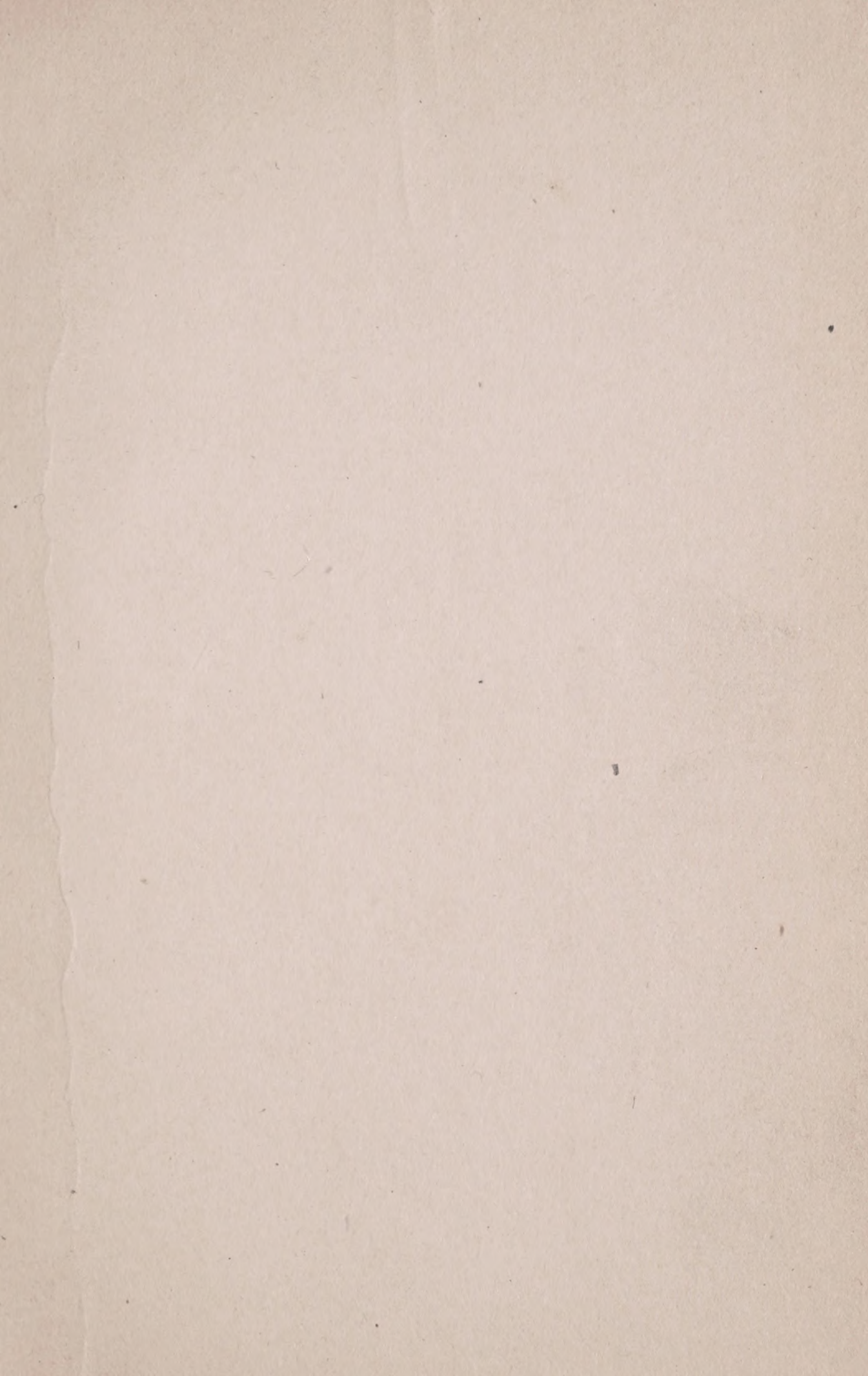


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"She was running back, her hands filled with the lovely blossoms."

PRINCESS POLLY AT SCHOOL

BY

AMY BROOKS

AUTHOR OF "THE PRINCESS POLLY SERIES"
"DOROTHY DAINTY SERIES"
"THE RANDY BOOKS," "THE
PRUE BOOKS," Etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

New York

THE PLATT & PECK CO.

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PRINCESS POLLY AT SCHOOL

CHAPTER I

A GAY WELCOME

A SOFT breeze swayed the tall, old-fashioned garden flowers, causing them to nod and bend as if courtesying to the sun.

The gorgeous chrysanthemums bowed their yellow heads, and one, larger and finer than its mates, nearly touched the gravel walk.

A pair of bright eyes had been watching it, and a soft paw reached out from beneath a low shrub to snatch at it.

Again the breeze shook the blossom,

and this time, its swaying yellow head was too tempting, and out rushed a big cat, who sprang at the blossom, catching it, and breaking it from the stem.

A lovely little girl ran laughing down the walk.

Her curls were sunny, and her merry eyes were blue.

“Oh, Mortimer darling!” she cried, picking up the big cat and gently caressing him, “did you want a flower so much? What a pity you haven’t a buttonhole to put it in.”

Lovingly he rubbed his handsome head against her shoulder.

“Oh, perhaps you were picking it for me, Sir Mortimer. You know I always tell you, dear, that I ought always to call you *Sir* Mortimer, because that’s your *truly* name, but sometimes I think just

Mortimer sounds sweeter. Sir Mortimer is grand."

"Hello!" cried a shrill little voice, and, turning, Polly Sherwood saw Gwen Harcourt climbing over the wall. Her hat had slipped from her head, and lay at the base of the wall, and she laughed when she saw a big toad hop toward it.

"Catch him!" she cried. "Catch him, Polly, and we'll dress him up in doll's clothes."

"I wouldn't touch him," said Polly.

"Well, I must say I think your cat is handsomer, but when I get tired of dolls, I dress up anything that can move, toads, or kittens, or even chickens. Dolls are stupid things. They never budge."

"Toads don't move unless you poke them," thought Polly, but she did not say it. She wished Gwen to forget the ugly-

looking toad, and let him remain undisturbed.

Gwen wriggled about on the top of the wall, and slipped to the ground. She had already forgotten the toad, and she left her hat lying where it had fallen.

"Now, then, Princess Polly, guess why I came?" she cried, as she ran toward her.

"Oh, I couldn't guess," said Polly, with a laugh, "because no one ever knows why you do things."

Gwen was delighted. She liked to be told that she was unusual.

She laughed and whirled about on the tips of her toes for a second, then shaking her curly head, she paused in front of Polly.

"You know, as well as I do, that it isn't long before school begins."

"Only three weeks," said Polly.

“Well, I’m to go to school, of course,” said Gwen, “but mamma said the finest thing to-day, and I wanted to tell somebody, so I ran over here to tell you. She says I’m so different from other children that I couldn’t bear going to school every day. She says I may stay at home whenever I want to.”

“Are you *sure* she said that?” Polly asked in surprise.

She knew, as all the children did, that Gwen was not always quite truthful.

“Of course I’m sure,” declared Gwen, “and I guess it’ll be pretty often I’ll want to. Why, where’s my hat? Oh, I remember; I dropped it when I was climbing over the wall.”

She ran to where it lay, picked it up, swung it from her arm by its elastic, and commenced to scale the wall.

She turned, when she reached the top, to say:

“I meant to stay and play with you this morning, but I just happened to remember that we’re going out for a drive. The carriage was at the door when I ran over here.”

She jumped down on the other side of the wall and disappeared among the trees.

That next garden through which she had hurried to Polly was not her own. Indeed, her home was much farther down the avenue, but she had preferred to run through grounds belonging to her neighbors, and she always liked to climb over a wall. She thought it more exciting than to enter any place by the usual way.

Polly watched her as she flitted across the lawn between trees and shrubs.

When Gwen was no longer in sight, Polly turned, and again she spoke to her pet.

“Did you ever see such a queer little girl, Sir Mortimer?”

The cat arched his back, and rubbed against her.

“Well, you can’t speak, darling, but I just *know* you never did,” said Princess Polly.

She turned toward the house, the big cat trotting along after her.

Stately old Sherwood Hall stood out clearly against its background of fine trees, and Polly Sherwood, as she looked toward it, thought that no little girl ever had so charming a home.

It was, in truth, the finest estate in all Avondale, and Polly, lovingly called “Princess Polly” by her friends, was the dear little daughter of the house.

It would have been difficult to tell which of her playmates loved her most fondly, but Polly believed that Rose Atherton cared very tenderly for her, and surely she loved Rose.

Whenever she passed the cottage where little Rose had lived with her Aunt Judith, she thought of the happy days when they had played together, and she often stopped to talk with Aunt Judith.

“When Rose was with me, I thought it very hard to care for her, but now I miss her, and I wish that she was here,” Aunt Judith had said, when Polly, on her way down the avenue, had paused at the cottage gate.

That had been a few days ago, and little Princess Polly, as she walked slowly up the driveway, thought of what Aunt Judith had said.

"I want Rose to play with," she murmured softly, "but I don't wish she was living at that little old cottage. It would be mean to wish that.

"Now that Aunt Rose has her in her fine house, Rose has everything that is nice, and I'm glad."

Then turning toward Sir Mortimer, who strolled along beside her, she asked his opinion.

"We love to play with Rose, but we'd be selfish if we wished she was living down there with Aunt Judith," she said.

"Pur-r-r," remarked Sir Mortimer, as if agreeing.

"Rose is coming! Rose is coming!" cried Polly, one morning, as she ran through the hall, and out upon the driveway.

"Is she comin' fer the visit ter-day?" questioned the maid as she passed.

"Oh, not to-day," said Polly, "but her letter came last night, and she's to be here to-morrow, and I'm *so* glad."

"Well, so am I," said the maid, "for ye're sunlight, yerself, Miss Polly, and with Miss Rose here, the place will seem merry. I heard the cook say this morning that she'd make any nice little treats yer mamma might approve of, ter help celebrate her coming."

"Oh, that's fine, *fine!*" cried Polly; "how good she was to say that. It seems as if almost everyone was good."

"Bless ye, Miss Polly!" cried the maid, "it's yer sunny little self that makes folks want ter be good ter yer."

"Why, you're sunny," declared Polly.

"I've been more cheery than I ever was

before since I lived under the roof with ye, ye little fairy!" said the maid, and she touched the soft, flaxen curls lovingly as she turned to mount the stairs.

Mrs. Sherwood had written to ask if Rose might come for a few weeks to Sherwood Hall, and a loving little note from Polly had been enclosed, urging Rose to coax for permission to make the visit.

Promptly the reply had come, saying that as Rose was to have private tutors, and her studies were not to commence until later, she might surely visit Polly, and quaintly Great-aunt Rose thanked Mrs. Sherwood for the pleasure offered Rose.

Now she was coming, coming!

Polly thought the long day would never pass, and when the next morning came, she watched the clock hands, and wondered why they moved so slowly.

At last lunch was over, and Polly sat in the window, Sir Mortimer very happy upon the soft cushion beside her.

"Think of it! Just think of it, darling," she cried suddenly, giving the big cat a warm hug; "in 'bout twenty minutes she'll be here!"

Sir Mortimer took the caress as a matter of course. He was very handsome, and he knew that everyone admired him. Thus he was used to being praised and petted.

"Oh, I meant to place some of those lovely chrysanthemums in our room. Rose loves the pink ones. I'll get them now! There's just about time."

She flew out through the hall, and down the driveway, and soon was running back, her hands filled with the lovely blossoms that she had hastily picked.

She rushed up the stairway, and thrust the long-stemmed flowers into a tall vase.

"I can't stop to give them any water, now," she said, "because,—oh, I *do* believe she's here!"

She ran to the hall and listened.

"Oh, yes, it's Rose!" she cried, and she hurried down the stairs, reaching the lower hall just as Marcus swung the door wide open for little Rose to enter.

The two little friends flew into each other's arms, and so excited were they, that they commenced to talk at the same moment.

"What train did you come on?"

"Did you expect me so soon?"

"I've been watching the clock ever since I got your note."

"I've so much to tell you."

"So have I."

Then they stopped to look at each other.

“Oh, you’re the same sweet ‘Princess Polly’ I used to play with,” said Rose.

“And you’re the same dear Rose,” Polly answered.

Indeed, each was as surprised to see that the other had not changed as if they had been parted for a year instead of a month.

Mrs. Sherwood now joined them, and greeted Rose warmly, and Rose felt as if she were being welcomed by relatives, rather than friends.

Together they ran up to Polly’s pretty room, and Rose took off her hat and light cloak.

She admired the beautiful flowers, and Polly laughed as she noticed that, in her haste to greet Rose, she had forgotten to fill the vase with water.

“Now, Rose,” she cried, when she had replaced the flowers, “come down to the garden. I’ve ever so many things to show you.”

With their arms about each other, they went down to the lawn, and Polly took Rose to the brook, and showed her a deep, clear pool where they could sail the pretty little boats that Uncle John had given them when they were his guests at his home, “The Cliffs,” down at the shore.

There was a new summerhouse, in which it was delightful to sit, and tell stories, or read.

“Now, come and see the place that Sir Mortimer has chosen for a nook to lie and dream in,” said Polly.

She led the way to a clump of shrubbery, that in the early spring was covered with soft, pink blossoms.

Now there were no flowers upon it, but its heavy foliage cast a deep shadow.

"He likes to go way in under these lowest branches, and lie on the grass," said Polly.

They peeped beneath the thick green leaves, and laughed.

There lay Sir Mortimer blinking at them, as if he wondered why he had been disturbed.

"I do believe he thinks that cozy place under the bushes is his little house," said Rose.

The sound of merry voices made them turn.

Two boys and two little girls were running up the driveway.

"Oh, Rose, Rose!" they cried, and then there was a merry chattering of laughing voices, all talking at the same time.

"How long can you stay?" Lena asked, when there was a pause.

"Oh, Lena Lindsey! I'm not to commence lessons until later and Polly's mamma wishes me to stay for quite a visit," said Rose.

"Then you stay!" said Rob Lindsey, "and Lena and I will coax Polly and Mrs. Sherwood to let us have you some of the time."

"Oh, Rob," cried his sister laughing, "we can't get Rose away from Sherwood Hall."

"I didn't mean just that," Rob answered quickly, "but if we *borrowed* her for an afternoon once in a while it would be no end of fun."

"Oh, it's nice to be wanted," said Rose with a happy sigh.

"We *all* want you," said Leslie.

“Yes, *all* of us,” said her brother Harry, “and we’ve missed you since you went away from Avondale to live with your Aunt Rose.”

All of the children had loved Rose, and Harry had always been a true friend.

Rose Atherton, when she had lived at the tiny cottage with her Aunt Judith, had been neatly but very plainly dressed.

Now, they noticed her dainty frock and shoes, and they were glad that she could have the pretty things that she had always wished for.

Dear little Rose was not vain, but all of her playmates were tastefully dressed, and she had longed to look as well as they. She had never wished to outshine them.

Her faded little gowns had often been shabby, their only good point had been that they were always neat.

"It's a long time since we have had Rose to play with," said Polly; "let's play 'blind-man's-buff.' "

"All right, Princess Polly," cried Rob; "we always do as you say."

"Who'll blind first?" Lena asked.

"I will," cried Rose, "and see who I'll catch!"

"Oh, Rose Atherton," said Leslie, "you needn't blind first."

"Oh, I want to!" said Rose; "it'll be fun!"

So Polly tied a handkerchief over Rose's eyes, knotting it at the back of her curly head.

Then the fun began.

They were on the open lawn, and now, Rose, her arms outstretched, was moving directly toward the group.

Softly they tiptoed past her, and Rob

coming up behind her, tweaked one of her brown curls.

"Oh, I think that was Rob," she cried, turning quickly about, but Rob had dropped to the grass and had crept away.

Again she extended her arms, and for a moment she paused. Was she listening?

Then once more she moved forward, reaching out to snatch at any playmate who might chance to be near.

And now Harry Grafton, laughing softly, touched the tip of her nose with a long flower stem.

Swiftly she turned and caught him before he could escape.

"You are Harry!" she cried.

"How do you know?" Lena asked.

Snatching off the handkerchief, Rose laughed merrily, as she saw that it was

Harry's wrist that she had caught and still held.

"How did you guess?" asked Harry.

"Because," said Rose, "your hair is curly, and right over your forehead there's a piece that crinkles more than all the rest. I felt for that, and when my fingers touched it, I knew that it was you."

"I was fairly caught," said Harry.

CHAPTER II

THE BIG CHEST

IT was a sunny day on which Rose arrived at Sherwood Hall, and several sunny days followed, in which the merry platmates united with Polly in making Rose very glad to be with them.

They had played "tag" and "hide-and-seek," "blind-man's-buff," and a dozen other games; they had sailed the tiny boats on the little brook, and Rose, who had few playmates at her home with Aunt Rose, felt that she never before had been so happy.

One morning when they awoke, the rain was pattering on the roof, and the

wind was blowing the rose vines against the latticed window.

Polly turned to know if Rose were asleep, and laughed when two bright brown eyes looked up at her.

“Oh, you’re awake!” cried Polly.

“Yes, and I’m glad you are, for while I thought you were asleep, I listened to the rain. Polly, it almost plays a tune when it splashes against the glass.”

For a moment they listened.

“Why, it isn’t really a tune,” said Polly, “but it does sound pretty.”

“And see the vine with the lovely rose, and buds on the end of it,” cried Rose. “When it strikes the window, it looks as if it wanted to be let in.”

“And it shall come in!” cried Polly, springing out upon the rug and rushing to the window.

She swung the lattice wide open, and tried to break the sturdy stem.

"It's too tough to break, but there are some little scissors in this tray," she said.

Going to the dresser she found the scissors, and soon held the beautiful rose in her hand.

She closed the window, and ran to give the lovely blossom to Rose.

"There it is!" she cried, "and the rain drops on it look like dew."

Rose laid it against her cheek, and Polly clapped her hands.

"Two roses!" she cried; "the pink one and you, and you are *some* pink. I mean your cheeks are."

And then the two little friends tried to see which should be dressed first.

"My shoes are tied!" cried Polly.

"My hair ribbon is tied!" said Rose.

How they laughed as they tried to hurry just a bit more, each endeavoring to get ready, if with but a moment's difference, before the other.

"Oh, you're dressed first!" cried Polly a moment later, "and what made me slow is that there's just one button on the back of this dress that I *almost* can't reach. You'll have to help me, Rose."

"All right!" said Rose, and when she had thrust the button into the buttonhole, they ran out into the hall, laughing as they went, and Rose followed Polly down the stairway.

After breakfast was over the question arose as to how they should amuse themselves on such a stormy day.

"It's warm out," said Rose, peeping through the screen door, "but it's wet as wet can be."

"Oh, I know what would be fun!" cried Polly, "and I'll ask mamma if we can do it."

"A game to play?" asked Rose.

"Finer than a game," declared Polly, "and I'll find mamma this minute, and ask her if she is willing to let us do the thing I've been wild for weeks to do."

Polly ran out into the hall, back through the living room, and from there into the conservatory.

"Oh, here you are, mamma," she cried. "I've been looking for you. It's raining so we can't go out, and will you let us go up to the garret storeroom where the trunks and chests are, and open them and see all of Grandma Sherwood's fine old things?"

Mrs. Sherwood fastened a slender blossoming vine that she had been training,

and turned to look at the little eager face.

“Do you think that Rose would enjoy that?” she asked.

“Oh, yes,” said Polly, “and there’s some dresses that belonged to your great aunt, oh, what was her name, mamma?”

“I think you mean Great-great-aunt Clementine,” said Mrs. Sherwood, “and certainly, Polly, if you are quite sure that it would please Rose to see them, you may spend a little time up there.”

“And may we ‘try on’ some of the things?” coaxed Polly. “We’ll be very careful of them.”

“You may ‘try on’ any of the bonnets, the mantles, or the gowns, Polly,” Mrs. Sherwood said, “but lay aside the smaller parcels that are wrapped in paper. Those are rare old laces, and I should not like to have those played with.”

"Oh, we'll not touch those," said Polly; "we'd only care for the pretty colored things."

She ran back to the living room, her eyes bright as stars.

"Come!" she cried. "We'll go up to the garret storeroom. The truly store-room is near my chamber, but the other one is way up under the roof, and there's trunks full of lovely old silk gowns, and satin mantles, and bonnets, and mamma says we may dress up in them!"

Rose waited for no urging.

"Oh, what fun!" she cried. "There isn't anything I'd like as well to do. Are there *many* in the trunk?"

Princess Polly grasped her hand, and together they ran up the stairs.

"*Trunk!*" she cried. "Why, there's every so many trunks, and every one has

fine things in it, and there's a big chest I haven't ever looked into. Mamma hasn't seen what's in it yet. She's been intending to ever since we came here to live.

"You know this house belonged to Grandpa Sherwood, and now it belongs to papa, and the old costumes were Grandma Sherwood's when she was a girl, and some of them Great-great-aunt Clementine wore."

They reached the spacious room that for years had stood deserted.

Old Grandfather Sherwood had had neither time nor inclination to search among its long-forgotten treasures.

Polly's mamma had been but a short time at Sherwood Hall, and she had been closely occupied with beautifying the grand old house, while Polly's papa had given all his spare time to directing im-

provements that were being made in the picturesque grounds. Mrs. Sherwood had visited the garret storeroom but once, but the place looked so interesting that she decided, at the first opportunity, to examine all of the old furnishings, ancient and debonair, and more carefully search the trunks that she saw, in her brief stay, held a wealth of quaint garments.

Now, Polly tightly clasping Rose's hand, stared in amazement at the beautiful things that seemed both new and strange.

"Oh, what a lovely garret!" cried Rose. "See the tiny mirror over there! Whose was that?"

"I don't know, but I think it was Grandma Sherwood's," said Polly; "and see this old chair," she continued. "Isn't it handsome?"

“Oh, it’s a beauty!” said Rose, “and I never knew, when I lived with Aunt Judith, and used to play with you, that you had such a lovely garret. See the beautiful window! See all the trunks!”

“Yes, and we can open every one of them. Which would you peep into first?” Polly asked.

“That one,” said Rose. “It’s so different from the others, with its great big lock and hinges.”

“All right,” cried Polly, and kneeling before it, she tried to turn the key. It was rusty, and for a moment it seemed impossible to move it.

Polly grasped it firmly, and gave it a vigorous twist, and just as she was about to give up, it turned, and the cover flew up just a bit.

“Oh, how full it is!” she cried, and

springing to her feet, she lifted the cover.

A number of paper parcels lay in view, and believing them to be the lace that her mamma had spoken of, Polly placed them very carefully on the floor beyond the trunk, and turned to see what lay beneath.

A heavy cotton, yellow with age, was spread over the contents.

Polly lifted it.

"Oh, oh-oo!" they cried, for there lay a mass of pale green satin, with flowers of soft yellow, as fresh, as beautiful, as when it had first been woven.

"Oh, take it out!" cried Rose. "It looks like the color of the green waves down at the shore."

They lifted it from the trunk, and unfolded it. Quaint ornaments fastened the waist, a kerchief draped the low neck, and the sleeves, evidently a trifle shorter

than elbow length, were edged with frills that matched the dainty kerchief.

"Oh, Polly, you'll look fine in that!" said Rose.

"What's this?" cried Polly, tugging at a huge parcel that appeared to be tied up in striped cotton.

"It can't be lace," ventured Rose, "because your mamma said the *little* parcels were lace, and that's a big one."

"Oh, it can't be lace," said Polly, "so we'll open it."

A strong tape was tied around it, and the two children took turns trying to pick out the hard knot with which it was tied.

At last it yielded, and the cotton covering spread just enough to show a glimpse of gayly flowered silk.

"Lovely!" cried Polly. "It looks like a flower garden!"

Together they shook out the folds of the skirt.

"See the little puffed sleeves!" cried Polly. "You'll look nice in that one."

"Let's try them on," said Rose.

"We will," agreed Polly, "but first let's open those bonnet boxes. Mamma says they *are* bonnet boxes, and if they are, we'd like to see what's in them."

"P'raps we could find one to match each of these dresses," said Rose.

"You undo that one, while I untie this," said Polly.

It was easy to untie the strings.

"Oh, look at this one!" cried Rose. "See the funny feathers on it!"

"And look at this one with all the flowers on it! That would look fine with your dress," said Polly. "Now we'll open this box, and see what's in it."

The two children bent over the box of gayly flowered paper, and together they managed to untie the obstinate knot.

With shouts of laughter they greeted the bonnet that lay in view.

It was of white straw, and a really huge affair, with wide yellow strings, a wealth of yellow roses with buds and foliage.

"You'll have to put that one on with the green dress with yellow flowers on it," said Rose, and then the fun began.

The garret was neatly papered and the floor scrupulously clean.

Although an unused room, the maid had cared for it as regularly as if it were a guest chamber.

Thus, while apart from the rest of the house, the garret storeroom was daintily kept, and the silken gowns could trail across its floor unharmed.

"I guess we'd better put these dresses on over our own frocks," said Polly.

"Oh, yes," Rose agreed. "They won't look so much too big for us, if we put them on over our own clothes."

It was the work of but a few moments for Polly to throw the green satin gown over her shoulders, and then thrust her arms through the sleeves.

"Why, how do these funny things on the waist button?" said Polly.

"Oh, I see!" she cried a moment later. "Those are only to look pretty. They don't button at all. There's hooks under the edge. Why, Great-great-aunt Clementine must have had a tiny waist, for while her skirt is ever so much too long for me, her waist must have been as little as mine. I can't hook these hooks."

"Let me help," said Rose, "and you

hold your breath, while I try to fasten it."

So Polly did hold her breath, and after much tugging, the waist was fastened.

"Now put on this big bonnet," said Rose. "Oh, *isn't* it big?"

"I'm going to stand on that chest, so I can look in that little mirror," said Polly.

"And while you're looking, I'll put on this lovely gown. I hope it's looser than yours was," said Rose.

"I hope it is," said Polly, "for this one is all stiff with big whalebones, and it's so tight I can just barely breathe. I hope Great-great-aunt Clementine didn't feel as I do when she wore it. I'm almost choking. I'll peep into the mirror just to see how I look, and then I'll take it off. P'raps there are some other gowns that are looser."

"You look like a truly princess in that," Rose said, "but a looser one would feel better."

Quickly she slipped into the flowered gown, tied the bonnet under her chin, and then hurried to where Polly was standing on the chest.

"Let me see *me!*" she cried.

"You look fine," said Polly; "come up here, and we'll look in together."

Then two lovely little faces peeped into the glass and laughed at the reflection there.

Then they sprang from the chest, daintily holding their long skirts aside.

"Oh, dear!" cried Polly, "isn't this skirt long?"

Then they opened the chest upon which they had been standing. It proved to have only gowns and coats of cloth care-

fully packed in it, and they returned to the trunk that had first attracted them.

There were mantles of satin and silk, and frocks of flowered silk muslin, but no garment so rich as the two gowns that they had first found.

"These aren't so fine as those we have on," said Polly.

"We might open another one," said Rose, but just at that moment Polly's slender fingers touched a small package that, when lifted out, proved to be a red leather case.

"Why, how does it open?" she cried. "I'm wild to know what's in it."

"Is that little button a clasp?" Rose asked. "Press it, Polly, and see."

"I did, but it won't open."

She pressed harder upon the little spring, and the case flew open.

"Why, it's a picture, a lovely little picture! Oh, who *do* you suppose it is?" cried Polly, in great excitement.

"Oh, look!" said Rose. "The beautiful lady is wearing the very dress that you have on!"

"Why, she *is*!" said Polly, "and see her lovely eyes, and her pink cheeks, and her lips, how red they are! Isn't she dear?"

"She's beautiful!" said Rose, "and the gold frame makes the colors in the picture look fine."

"Let's run down to mamma, and see if she knows who the fine lady is."

"Oh, yes, come!" cried Rose; "I'm wild to know."

Polly placed the picture in the leather case, and then, together they ran down to the living room.

"Sure, Miss Polly, you an' Miss Rose



"Oh, who do you suppose it is?" cried Polly.

make a picture with all them fine things on. I think I never saw ye look so sweet," said the maid, who was dusting, but paused to admire the two little friends.

"We've been up in the garret, and we found these gowns in a trunk," said Polly, "but we found something else, and I want to show it to mamma."

"And I'm quite ready to see it," said Mrs. Sherwood, with a soft laugh.

She had just come in from the conservatory, and now she looked first at one quaintly dressed little figure, and then the other.

"Why, you are two fine little ladies," she said. "Have you come to call upon me?"

"Oh, yes," said Polly, eagerly; "we came to let you see our gowns and bon-

nets, but please look at this lovely picture, and tell us who the beautiful lady is.”

“A picture, did you say?” Mrs. Sherwood asked, taking the leather case that Polly offered her.

She opened the case, and, with a little cry, stared fixedly at the picture, that seemed to return her gaze.

“Clementine Sherwood! Great-great-aunt Clementine!” she whispered after a moment.

“Oh, mamma, how *did* you know who she was?”

For a moment Mrs. Sherwood studied the picture, then turning it over, she looked at a few lines written on the back.

Clementine,
youngest daughter
of
Arthur Stanton Sherwood.
Nathan Van Deel, pinx't.

"See, Polly," Mrs. Sherwood said; "here is her name, and also, the name of the artist who painted it."

Polly and Rose looked closely at the signature.

"His first name is Nathan, and his middle name is Van Deel; his last name is P-i-n-x-t," said Polly. "My, but that's a funny name!"

Then Mrs. Sherwood laughed.

"Oh, Polly dear, that's not his name. His name was Nathan Van Deel, and pinx't is a short way of writing the Latin word, pinxit, which means that he painted it. It is a wonderful bit of painting on ivory. I am *so* glad you found it."

"Why are you glad?" Polly asked. "Is it because it is so lovely?"

"Well, surely she is lovely, but there is another reason. The miniature be-

longed in the family, but had not been seen for a long time, and your father believed that it had been stolen. There is quite a story connected with it, and after lunch, I will tell the story to you and Rose.”

CHAPTER III

THE STORY

AFTER lunch, Polly and Rose sat waiting for the promised story.

Some fine new plants for the conservatory had arrived, and Mrs. Sherwood was busy giving directions as to where they should be placed.

Outside the rain pattered, and now the wind was rising. The trees and shrubs were drenched. Surely, no one would care to venture out on such a stormy day.

It had been warm in the early morning, and had seemed like a summer shower.

Now the wind blew from the east, and doors and windows were closed, and a

wood fire blazed and crackled in the great fireplace.

"This," said Polly, "is mamma's favorite chair, and I'll draw it nearer the fire. She shall sit there to tell the story, and we'll sit on these low stools to listen."

Mrs. Sherwood soon joined them, and she smiled when she saw her chair, and her little audience waiting for her.

"The story of Great-great-aunt Clementine might almost be called 'The Unhappy Princess,' " she began, "for while she was not a princess, she looked, they say, like a truly royal personage.

"She was very bright, light-hearted, and gay, and her father gave her everything that wealth could purchase.

"One winter, when Avondale had been gayer than usual, a birthday party was given for Clementine. A beautiful

gown, the one that you have on, Polly, was made for her to wear on her eighteenth birthday, and enough guests were invited to fill Sherwood Hall. They were to remain for a house party, and it is said that Clementine had never seemed so gay.

“Among her friends was young Nathan Van Deel, an artist, talented but with his fortune yet to make. Clementine’s father told her not to invite him, giving as his only reason that he was not wealthy.

“‘Riches aren’t everything,’ Clementine had said angrily; ‘my party would not be complete if *any* friend were left out.’

“‘I command you to leave him off of your invited list,’ was the stern reply.

“The young girl did not dare to answer, but she was determined.

"Her father had paid generously for the miniature that the artist had painted, but while he valued the portrait, he did not care for the young man's friendship. The miniature had represented the lovely Clementine in a garden, a white muslin gown, and a hat wreathed in pink roses making her charm even greater."

"But, mamma, she has on this green satin," Polly said, as Mrs. Sherwood paused.

"I know," Mrs. Sherwood said, "and this is another picture.

"The night of the party came, and throngs of happy young people arrived to greet Clementine. Among them, the merriest of all, was Nathan Van Deel, the handsome young artist.

"Clementine's father was furious.

"There is much of the story that you

two little girls would not understand, but this I will tell you.

“Some tableaux were arranged for one of the last evenings that the guests were to remain.

“One, called ‘An Artist’s Studio,’ angered old Arthur Sherwood, because Nathan posed as the artist, and Clementine as his model.

“At the end of the entertainment, he scolded her soundly for taking part in a tableau with Nathan, and it happened that Nathan overheard what he said.

“The next bit of the story reads like your fairy tales, where the bold prince runs away with the princess, for that is just what Nathan did.

“He knew that Clementine cared for him, and when he found her crying, he led her out into the garden, where his big

gray horse stood saddled and bridled.

“She was hurt and angry with her proud, old father, who had been very stern, and almost before she knew it, she was swung up onto the saddle in front of Nathan, and away to the parsonage they rode, where, in a few moments they were married.

“Old Arthur Sherwood could not forgive his favorite daughter, or her artist husband.

“He did not often see her, and left the greater part of his wealth and Sherwood Hall to his son.

“I had seen the picture of Clementine in the white gown, and I knew the beautiful face at once when I looked at this miniature.

“Nathan painted her in the green satin gown, doubtless because she wore that on

the evening that she became his bride. I can not imagine how the picture and gown came to be in this house. She never lived here after her marriage."

"I think it's a sad story," said Polly. "Don't you, Rose?"

"I think *some* of it is sad, but was she unhappy with the artist?" little Rose asked, "or was he good to her?"

"That is the one pleasant part of the story," said Mrs. Sherwood. "She was very happy, they say; he was always loving and kind, and he became famous as a portrait painter, so that they were prospered."

"Oh, I'm glad!" cried Polly.

"So am I," said Rose, "and just as you've told that the story ended nicely, the sun is coming out."

"It does end just like the fairy tales,"

said Polly, "for don't you know they always say, 'And they lived happy ever after'?"

"That is a cheerful way to look at it," Mrs. Sherwood said, "and surely the smiling face of the miniature seems to prove that the fair lady was very happy."

"I shall not put it back in its hiding place in the old trunk," she continued, "but, instead, I will hang it here where the light will touch it lovingly. She shall be in the living room of Sherwood Hall that was once her home, and we can enjoy her beauty."

As she spoke, Mrs. Sherwood took a small picture from a brass hook that was within easy reach, and slipping the gilt ring in the top of the miniature frame over it, stepped back to note the effect.

"It is very lovely in that light," she

said. "It shall hang there and beautify the room."

As they stood looking at the exquisite little miniature in its tiny gold frame, a ray of sunlight touched it.

The clouds had departed, and the sunbeam, coming in at the window, had given the lovely Clementine a welcome to her old home, Sherwood Hall.

They were still admiring the picture when quick steps upon the piazza told that someone had arrived.

They heard the door opened by the maid, and then,—

"Is Polly at home?"

"Yes, Miss Polly's at home. Will you come in?"

"No, I *won't*. I want her to come out, and bring her friend with her. You tell her so."

Only one person in the neighborhood spoke as rudely as that!

Polly looked at Rose.

"It's Gwen Harcourt!" she said, and Rose knew that Polly was not pleased that she had come.

The maid appeared in the doorway.

"Miss Polly, the Harcourt child wants ter see yer, an' I asked her ter come in, but she won't come."

"Oh, dear," said Polly. "Well, I wanted to go out to play with you, Rose, and Gwen is,—well, rather rough in the house, so I guess we'd *better* go out."

"Try to be patient with her, dear," Mrs. Sherwood said, as the two little girls went out to greet Gwen Harcourt.

"I will," Polly answered, and Rose turned to say:

"I'll help her."

They found Gwen waiting for them on the piazza.

“Isn’t she sweet?” thought Rose, but in less than ten minutes she had changed her mind.

It was true that Gwen looked very pretty as she stood waiting for them.

Her dainty white frock was surely becoming, and she wore a soft pink sash, a ribbon of the same color tying her bright curling hair.

She smiled as they came toward her. Truly, she *looked* sweet.

Her greeting, however, was far from charming.

“Hello!” she said. “Is that your friend that’s come for a visit?”

“Oh, Gwen!” cried Polly. “This is Rose Atherton, and she’s dear to play with.”

"Hm," remarked Gwen, at the same time staring at Rose as if she were merely a doll, or a wax figure exhibited to be looked at.

Then, after a pause she said:

"I came over to see what she looked like."

"And now you do see, will you play with us?" Rose asked.

"I don't know," Gwen replied; "I was trying to make a hand-organ, when I just happened to think to run over here.

"I had an old firkin that our cook let me take, and I was trying to fasten a handle onto it. I took the handle of the clothes wringer, the maid had broken it off, and I thought if I could fasten it to the firkin, I could grind it like a hand-organ."

"And what would make it play tunes?" questioned Polly.

"I hadn't got to that part of it," snapped Gwen; "now let's play something, or I'll go home."

Polly longed to say, "Well, go right along," but instead, she said:

"What shall we play?"

"Let's play 'I spy.' I know a new way to play it. The old way isn't any fun. I made the *new* way myself. Come!" cried Gwen.

They followed her as she ran down the driveway.

At the foot of a small tree she paused.

"The *new* way, the way I play 'I spy,' is to spy something quick, and then, go right where it is, and look at it!" she said.

"Now, it's my turn first," she continued, "and I 'spied' a bird's nest in this tree when I was coming over here. Now I'm going right up to *look* at it!"

The branches were low, and quite near together, and like a cat, she sprang up into the nearest ones, and began to climb higher and higher.

She could climb as well as a boy, and she was proud to show how quickly she could reach the top.

The embroidery on the skirt of her frock caught on a twig, and she roughly twitched it free.

"Oh, you've torn your frock!" cried Polly.

"Never mind," said Gwen, with a laugh. "I've reached the nest!"

Then, like a little monkey, she slipped from one limb to another, until, at last, she stood upon the gravel walk beside them.

"Now, *you* spy something," she said, pointing at Rose, "and *you* climb to see it.

It's 'no fairs' spying things that you can look at real easy."

"Why, I don't see anything that isn't easy to reach," said Rose.

"Pooh!" cried Gwen. "You don't look for things. See the big gilt rooster on the weathervane up on the stable? Well, climb up there, and look him in the face!"

"Why, Rose can't go up there!" said Polly.

"Can't she climb?" queried Gwen, with a giggle, "or is she 'fraid she'll tear her clothes?"

"Tisn't either thing," said Rose, "for I can climb, and almost never tear my frocks."

"Well, I *dare* you to touch that big old gilt rooster!" cried Gwen.

"I'll not let Rose climb up there," said Polly, "and I wouldn't want you to,

either. You might get a fall and be hurt. We can play something that doesn't make us climb."

"Oh, of course," Gwen agreed, "we could sit in the house and make patch-work. We *couldn't* get hurt doing that! It wouldn't be much fun, though."

"Come, Gwen," said Polly, "we can play something we'll *all* like."

She was not glad that Gwen had come, but she was always a little peace-maker, and she had seen Gwen's eyes snap.

"Every time I come over here we do something *quiet*," she complained.

Gwen thought anything quiet that did not risk life, and limb.

Before Polly could think of any new game that might please her, Inez Varney stopped at the entrance to the garden.

"Oh, Gwen!" she cried, "I've been

hunting everywhere for you. I haven't anyone to play with. Come over to my house, will you?"

Without a word, or even a glance toward Princess Polly, or Rose, Gwen ran down the driveway and up the avenue with Inez.

They could not hear all that she said, but just a few words came back on the breeze.

"And they won't play anything that's any fun, so p'raps they'll go in, now, and make patch-work."

They both laughed as they ran along.

Polly's cheek flushed, and Rose's brown eyes looked darker.

"We're not slow, or stupid," said Polly, to which Rose replied:

"No, and we're not rude."

"Well, she went off with Inez, and that's

all right. Now, come and swing in the hammock, and tell me what I'm just wild to know," said Polly.

"I'll tell you anything," Rose said, as they ran up to the piazza.

They sprang into the hammock, and set it swinging gayly.

"Now, tell me," said Polly, "how are you going to have your lessons?"

"Why, I'll have them at home," Rose said, in surprise. "Don't you know I told you that in a little letter I wrote to you?"

"Oh, I know that," said Polly, "but what I mean is, *when* will you have them. We go to school twice a day, and Rose, are you going to have those teachers with you *all* day?"

Rose laughed and shook her head.

"Oh, no, no!" she cried. "They're to be at the house every forenoon, and the music

teacher will only come once a week."

Polly looked relieved.

"That's only half as bad as I thought it was," she said, "for I thought there wouldn't be a single minute when you could play, because those horrid teachers would be with you all day, *making* you study."

For a few moments neither spoke, and the gay colored hammock swung higher than before, then, letting it swing slower, Polly looked into Rose's brown eyes.

"Are you glad you're to have your teachers at your house?" she asked.

"I don't think I'll like it *at all*," Rose replied.

"It's so quiet at home, I'd love to go to school with the other children," she continued, "for then I'd have someone to play with."

"Why don't you tell your Aunt Rose,

and p'raps she'll let you," Polly ventured, hoping to comfort her.

"Oh, you don't know Aunt Rose," was the quick reply; "I mean you don't know her same's I do, or you wouldn't say that."

"Why wouldn't I?" Polly asked.

"Oh, because you wouldn't," said Rose. "Why Aunt Rose isn't ever angry, and I haven't heard her say one single cross word since she took me home to live with her, but Princess Polly, she doesn't *ever* change her mind! When I asked her to let me go to school with the other children, she looked at me a minute, and then she said:

" 'I think it much finer for you, as my little niece, to have private tutors, and I have already engaged them. Your lessons will begin in a few weeks,' and tho' she smiled, you'd just know that it wouldn't be any use to fuss."

CHAPTER IV

AT SCHOOL

ONE morning Polly and Rose ran out into the garden, singing as they went a little song that Uncle John had taught them during their stay at his home, "The Cliffs."

"Leslie and Lena are coming over to play with us this morning," said Polly, "and I'll ask Leslie to tell us how to play a new game that she has learned."

"She was visiting her cousin when I was with you at your Uncle John's, at the shore, and her cousin and all her little friends were playing it."

"What kind of a game is it?" Rose asked.

She had always liked Leslie Grafton, and she thought if Leslie liked the new game, it *must* be very nice.

"Oh, there's verses to sing," Polly said, "and the girls clasp hands, and dance around in a ring, then one of them stands in the middle—Oh, here they come, and I'll ask her now!"

"Hello, Hello! We've come to stay all the morning with you!" cried Lena and Leslie, as if with one voice.

"And we've ever so much to tell."

"It's news, too!" added Lena Lindsey, "and we can't wait to tell it!"

"Come to the summerhouse," said Polly; "it's the finest place to hear it," and they followed her, with flying feet, laughing gaily as they ran, and then seated

themselves closely together in the arbor.

“Now,” said Polly, “what’s the news?”

“First of all, just hold your breath, because,—school’s to commence next Monday!” Lena said.

“Next Monday!” cried Polly. “Why this is Saturday, and I thought we were to have another week for play.”

“So did we!” said Lena.

“And we’ve planned the finest things for next week,” said Leslie, “and here’s school to commence the first thing Monday morning. It isn’t that I don’t like school. I love to go; it’s that we meant to have some fine times while we still had *every* day in the week. Now it will be only Saturdays.”

“Just Saturdays,” said Polly, “and Rose, you’ll have to go to school with me. I did think one more week of your visit

would be free for play. Who says it's Monday?"

"Oh, the committee, and it was in this morning's paper, *The Avondale News*," said Lena, "and when Rob read it he put the paper down and he said:

" 'School Monday morning! I wish those committee men had to go,' and papa said, 'Robert!' but he laughed, and Rob can't stay mad more than a minute, and he laughed with him."

"And Mrs. Harcourt called on mamma, and she said she hoped that the teachers would not do anything that would curb Gwen's imagination," said Leslie.

"Harry and I were in the hall when she said that, and Harry whispered to me, and he said:

" 'She needn't worry. Nothing but a *muzzle* would stop the big yarns she tells.'"

"I know he was naughty, but I couldn't help laughing."

"I know I'd have laughed if I'd heard him say that," said Rose.

"Can't you just *see* Gwen, if someone put a muzzle on her?" said Leslie.
"Wouldn't she tear round?"

"She does *now*," said Lena, and neither denied that.

"And you know Gyp ran away, because the man, I've forgotten who he was, went to the old hut where he lived to tell his mother that he *must* go to school," said Lena.

Oh, yes, Polly remembered that.

"Well, that's three weeks ago, and his mother thinks he's lost, and she wants the police to find him."

"There, that's all the news," said Leslie; "now let's play."

"And Polly says you know a lovely new game," said Rose, "so let's play that."

"Then come out on the lawn, and we'll play it," said Leslie.

"Now we'll join hands," said Lena, "and dance 'round and 'round keeping time to the music that Leslie sings. The game is called 'The Rose Ring,' so it's just the thing to play while Rose is here. You'll soon learn the verses. Come!"

Quickly the four little friends clasped hands, and gayly they danced about while Leslie sang this merry verse:

"Floating clouds, and sky so blue,
Flowers of the brightest hue,
Hearts so light we have to sing
While we dance a fairy ring."

They paused while Leslie explained.

"The next verse is just as pretty, and when we sing that, one of us leaves the



"They clasped hands, and gaily they danced."



ring, and stands in the middle, and we sing the name of the one we choose right in the verse. This time, it will be you, Princess Polly."

She laughed gayly, as she spoke, and again they clasped hands, and once more the merry ring flew round, while Leslie sang the second verse.

"Princess Polly, come this way;
You must in the center stay.
Now we trip with footsteps free,
While the ring consists of three."

"Now," said Leslie, "choose one of us, and leave her in the center, while you join the ring again."

Again they danced to the lively melody as Leslie sang the third verse:

"Polly, quickly tell your choice,
With your love her heart rejoice.
Now, once more you join the ring,
Gayly dance, and gladly sing."

Of course Polly chose Rose, and Rose laughed, and chose Polly.

Then, because they could not continue doing that, Polly next chose Lena, and then Lena chose Leslie.

Leslie was still in the center, the others dancing around her, when she saw Harry passing the driveway.

"Wait, girls!" she cried, then raising her voice she called, "Harry! Harry! come here, I choose you!"

He turned, and seeing the ring, ran toward them.

"Hello!" he cried, "what's the game?"

"I've chosen you, Harry," Leslie replied, at the same time catching his arm and drawing him inside the ring of laughing girls.

"Well, this is a *fine* game!" said Harry.

"What do you call it? 'Snatch the Boy'?"

I'd think that might be the name of it, by the way Leslie snatched me."

"Oh, Harry, that isn't the name," Leslie said, while they all laughed at the name he had given it.

"It's a lovely game," said Lena, "and it's called 'The Rose Ring.' Now, girls, dance around him, and we'll sing the verse."

Gayly they sang it, as before, using Harry's name where, at first they had sung "Princess Polly."

"Master Harry, come this way;
You must in the center stay.
Now trip lighter than before.
See! Our ring consists of four."

"Next verse, *you* can choose," said Leslie.

"All right," said Harry; "I know which one, *now!*"

Faster, and yet faster flew the merry ring around him.

“Harry, quickly tell your choice,
With your love her heart rejoice.
Now once more you join the ring,
Gayly dance and gladly sing,”

“Come, Rose,” he said, “I choose you. I didn’t have to even *try* to think who it would be.”

Rose’s cheeks were very pink, as she took his hand, and entered the ring.

And now another merry voice told that Rob Lindsey was coming to join them.

“Well, I wondered where Harry had gone,” said Rob. “He left me to go home after his ball, and was this where he expected to find it?”

“Stop teasing!” said Harry. “Leslie wanted me to join the game, so I stayed a few minutes.”

"He stayed to please Leslie, and then he chose Rose Atherton. Oh, *my!*"

"Quit it!" cried Harry, laughing.

"Just wait 'til it's your turn!" he said.

Harry now joined the ring, and again they danced, this time all sang the verse.

With a smile, Rose chose Lena, and, of course, when her turn came, Lena chose Rob, for the fun of seeing him in the ring.

Then Rob chose Princess Polly.

"Master Robert, come this way;
You must in the center stay.
Swifter yet to dance we strive,
Now our ring has stretched to five."

Anyone could have guessed that.

Rob always favored Polly Sherwood.

"Now," said Leslie, "we've each been chosen once, and Polly has been chosen twice. When we've each been inside the ring, and one of us is chosen for the second

time, she doesn't chose again, but turns round and round, throwing a kiss to each of us as we dance about her.

"There's a verse for this, too, and it's a pretty one," she concluded.

"Polly, you for queen we choose,
And you cannot well refuse,
Now, once more you join our ring,
Dancing with us while we sing."

It was a pretty picture, the ring of merry, smiling playmates circling around sunny-haired Princess Polly, while from her dainty finger-tips she tossed a kiss to each.

"Thanks! I caught it!" declared Rob, as she laughed, and flung a kiss toward him.

"I thought girls couldn't throw straight," Harry said, with a laugh.

"Polly did *that* time!" said Rob, and

Polly blushed, and looked down at her shoes, so that her long lashes swept her cheeks.

Leslie and Lena clasped her hands, and away they tripped, a lively ring of six.

"Faster, faster!" cried Rob. "Faster, and keep time to the fine old verse I've made."

"Why, who ever heard you make poetry, Rob?" cried Lena in surprise.

"Here's a dainty one," said Rob, "and you listen. Ready, now! Dance!"

Around they spun, while Rob sang this wild effort at verse making:

"Hear us while we make a din!
Are our throats all lined with tin?
See our little shoes so fine;
Some wear sixes, some wear nine!"

"Oh, Rob!" cried Lena, "we don't *any* of us wear number nine shoes. How awful!"

"Well, I had to have a rhyme, didn't I?" he said, as well as he could while laughing.

"I could have made it worse, like this:

"See! Our shoes are small, but then
Some of us can wear a *ten*!"

Shouts of laughter greeted this, and the dancing ceased, because they could not dance and laugh at the same time.

They sat down upon the grass to rest, and regain their breath.

"We've had a fine vacation," said Rob, "but I can't see why the committee put up that notice to have school commence a week earlier than anyone expected. Wonder what their rush was?"

"I know," said Harry, "because I asked father this morning, at breakfast, and he said that they intend to close school a week earlier next summer, so it's the same num-

ber of weeks, after all. Last June the week at the end of the term was almost too hot to bear."

"Oh, then it's fair enough," said Rob, "I thought they were intending to give us an extra week. Well, I'm glad to-day is a pleasant day. We've had a jolly morning, and this afternoon, Harry, we'll make the bows and arrows we've been planning."

"And we'll go over to the little grove back of Polly's house, and gather some of the fall flowers," said Leslie; "I mean we will if we'd all like to," she added.

"Of course we'd like to!" they cried, as if with one voice, and they agreed to meet soon after lunch, and to bring home as many of the wood beauties as they could carry.

The little grove was immediately be-

hind Sherwood Hall, and quite near enough to be safe to roam through.

Promptly they met, Leslie and Lena finding Polly and Rose waiting for them at the corner of the sunny lane that led to the grove.

They found more flowers than they dreamed were there, and turned homeward with their arms laden with all the blossoms that they could carry.

"Mamma will use some of these for a center-piece at dinner," said Polly; "she likes to have wild-flowers, and quite often she uses them instead of blossoms from her conservatory."

"Wouldn't it be funny if each of us has a center-piece of these same wild-flowers to-night?" said Leslie.

"I wouldn't wonder if we did," Lena

replied, "for my mamma loves wild-flowers, and I know yours does, too."

They parted at the corner, where they had met, Lena and Leslie going down the avenue, while Rose and Polly turned toward Sherwood Hall.

"See you at school Monday," the two little friends cried, as they stepped out onto the avenue.

"Yes, Monday," called Polly and Rose together.

"I'm to go over to Aunt Judith's to lunch," Rose said the next morning, as they sprang from the carriage to the sidewalk in front of the church.

"Oh, I'd forgotten you were going there to-day," said Polly, a shade of disappointment on her sweet face.

"Well, I *do* love to stay with you," Rose said, "but you know I promised."

"Oh, I know you did," Polly said quickly, "so you truly *must* go. Mamma says we must be careful what we promise, but when we've made a promise, we *must* keep it. If you *hadn't* been going there to-day, I'd been glad, but you'll be with me late in the afternoon, and then we'll talk fast enough to make up for lost time."

They laughed softly, and then entered the church, walking up the broad aisle to the pew that had belonged to the Sherwood family for many years.

The music was delightful, but the service was a long one, and Polly was just wondering if it would ever end, when Rose touched her arm, and pointed toward a pew at their right, and two rows ahead.

The pews between where they were sitting, and the one toward which Rose pointed, were vacant, but in that pew sat Gwen.

“What *is* she doing?” whispered Rose.

Polly watched her for a few moments.

She seemed to be very busy, folding and unfolding a paper that she had found in the rack with the hymn books.

Sometimes a long feather bobbed above the back of the pew. It was one of the sort that are used in making feather dusters.

Doubtless the janitor had dropped it while dusting, but what was Gwen doing with it?

They had not long to wait.

Again the long, stringy feather bobbed as if she were giving it a sharp twist, and then,—

To Mrs. Harcourt's horror, her small daughter took the "soldier cap" that she had fashioned from the folded paper, clapped it on her curly head and turning around, nodded to those seated behind her, the old feather wagging with every nod!

Mrs. Harcourt hastily snatched the cap, Mr. Harcourt did nothing, but *looked* volumes, and Gwen, for once quite crushed, sat still until the rector said, "Amen."

She was not wholly subdued, however, for as she passed Polly and Rose, she giggled, as she whispered loudly:

"I don't care if I did have to take it off. Everyone saw it first, and didn't that old feather wag just beautifully?"

CHAPTER V

AT AUNT JUDITH'S COTTAGE

THE Sherwood carriage paused at the cottage, and Rose, after promising Polly that she would not stay *very* long, left the carriage, and sprang to the sidewalk.

A moment she leaned upon the gate, and watched the handsome horses, as they pranced along the avenue.

"It's lovely to be with Princess Polly," she said; then, with a little sigh, she turned to walk up the path to the door.

She wondered if Aunt Judith cared much to see her. She had received her invitation in a prim little note, and this

would be the first time that she had seen Aunt Judith since Aunt Rose had taken her home.

As she reached the step, the door opened, and a thin, eager voice cried:

“Rose! Little Rose, I felt *sure* you’d come.”

Rose lifted her face, and Aunt Judith stooped to kiss the soft lips.

Afterward, Rose wondered *why*.

In all the time that she had lived at the cottage, Aunt Judith had never kissed her.

“Come right in, and lay your wraps off,” Aunt Judith said quickly, “and we’ll have lunch.”

A quiet, reserved woman, she felt almost abashed that she had done so bold a thing as to have kissed her little niece.

Therefore she bustled about, to hide her confusion, giving a touch here and there,

to the little tea-table that Rose remembered so well.

Three times each day she used to sit opposite Aunt Judith and always the little dining-room had looked lonely and dark.

Now, with the memory of the beautiful dining-room at the grand home of Aunt Rose, the room seemed smaller, and darker than ever.

Then a quick feeling of pity for the lonely woman flashed through the loving little heart.

"If this room is lonely with two people in it, what *can* it be with one?" she thought.

"I hope you'll like your lunch, Rose," said Aunt Judith; "I've some of the jam you always were so fond of."

Rose tried to swallow a lump in her throat, but there was something pleading,

almost pathetic in Aunt Judith's effort to make Rose glad that she had come.

"I *do* like my lunch, and the jam is just as nice as it used to be when we had it on Sundays and holidays," Rose said.

There were light biscuits, and fine tarts, the cold ham looked tempting, and the plum cake and jam completed the menu that Rose so well remembered.

She knew, now, that Aunt Judith had really wished her to come.

"She didn't ask me to lunch, just because I was here in Avondale," thought little Rose; "she did truly *want* me."

"The old Atherton house used to be called very grand," said Aunt Judith, "but Aunt Rose and Aunt Lois lived abroad for years, so I've not seen it for so long that I can't remember when it was. Is it beautiful now?"

"It's lovely," said Rose, "and I never thought of it before; why don't you sometimes come there?"

"Your Aunt Rose and I never agreed very well when we were girls," Aunt Judith replied, "and we shouldn't likely do much better now."

Rose hardly knew what to say.

"Aunt Rose and Aunt Lois seem pleasant *now*," she ventured.

"Oh, we never quarreled," Aunt Judith said, with an odd smile, "but we didn't exactly agree. Your Aunt Lois was very placid and peaceable, but Aunt Rose was always set, and when her mind was moved in one direction nothing could make her change it. I'll admit I was much like her, so you can easily see that we wouldn't hardly be 'chums.'"

Ah, yes, Rose well remembered that

Aunt Judith never could be persuaded to change her mind, tears and pleading being useless.

"Aunt Rose is just the same," she thought, "for when I told her I'd *so* much rather go to school with other children, she said:

" 'I know what is best. You will have private tutors.' "

Rose did not tell her thoughts to Aunt Judith, because she feared it might seem like complaining.

She knew that Aunt Rose spared nothing that money could obtain for her, and that she had engaged private tutors because she believed that thus Rose would be more carefully trained than if she were a pupil at the public schools.

"You have the pretty things to wear that you always longed for," Aunt Judith

said. "I often think of how you craved them, but Rose, I *couldn't* get them for you."

There were tears in Aunt Judith's eyes.

Rose slipped from her chair. and in an instant was at Aunt Judith's side.

"Oh, I *know* you couldn't," she cried, taking the thin hand in both of her own, "and I ought not to have wanted them, but I couldn't help it. Truly I couldn't. Aunt Rose is rich, and it's *different* for her to give nice things to me. It was a bother for you to take care of me."

Then the strangest thing happened.

Quickly Aunt Judith's arms were about her, and what was she saying?

"Rose, little Rose, I've missed you so that I would have been glad to have all the care again. I never knew how much you were to me, until they had taken you

from me. I would have said that it would be a relief to have them care for you, but after you were gone, I knew that I would give anything to call you back, but Rose,—I'd nothing to give.

“Your Great-aunt Rose would never give you up. She'd made up her mind to take you to her home, and she was never known to change her mind.”

A rare delight made Rose's heart beat faster, and her cheeks grew pinker.

“Oh, Aunt Judith, I'm so glad to know that you cared when I went. I didn't think you'd miss me,” Rose murmured, leaning closer.

“I didn't think I would, but it took no time for me to find out. Rose, the night that I found you were gone, I could not sleep. It was then that I knew how lonely the cottage would be without you.”

Rose looked up into the face that bent over her.

"I used to think that no one but Princess Polly wanted me, and *now*, why, now *everyone* wants me! Oh, it is sweet to know that *everyone* wants me!"

The child's heart was full of happiness because *now* there were those who loved her, and she felt rich, rich,—not because of her dainty garments and beautiful home, but that she now possessed many friends, and a wealth of love that was freely given her.

"It hurt more to know you didn't like to take care of me, than it did to wear old frocks," said Rose.

"Could you forgive that, little Rose, since I'd be glad to care for you now?" Aunt Judith asked.

"Oh, yes, I think so," Rose said eagerly,

“because now you *do* care, and that makes it seem even, and fair.”

Little Rose could not be unforgiving.

She drew her chair around to the side of the table nearer Aunt Judith.

“I’ll sit close beside you while we eat our cake and jam,” she said, “and after lunch we’ll do the dishes together same as we used to.”

Aunt Judith smiled. How strange it was that when the little girl was with her, she had never noticed her winning ways.

Now, she thought there never had been a child so charming.

Deftly Rose wiped the quaint cups and saucers, the plates, and then the old-fashioned spoons.

When they were all replaced in the wee china closet, they turned toward the little parlor.

"If you sit in your big rocking-chair, I'll get my little cricket, and sit beside you, just where I used to sit when you were sewing, and I pulled out the bastings," said Rose.

Aunt Judith sat down in her favorite chair, and Rose noticed that she held a tiny box in her hand.

"Have you something to show me?" she asked, "something I haven't seen?"

"It is something you've often seen," Aunt Judith said, "and you may like to see it again."

As she spoke, she opened the little round box, and there, on a satin lining lay a quaint brooch, that Rose well remembered.

"Oh, it is Grandpa Atherton's pin. You used to let me see it sometimes, and I thought it the loveliest thing I ever saw."

"It is to be yours, now," said Aunt Judith.

"The little flower pin is to be *mine*!" cried Rose. "Why, Aunt Judith, I oughtn't to take it from you. You've always cared so much for it. Its petals are rubies, and its tiny yellow center you told me was a topaz, and the wee leaves are emeralds. It is all so tiny and dainty you couldn't bear to part with it."

"I want you to have it," Aunt Judith said, firmly.

"Your Aunt Rose gives you fine clothes, and your Uncle John, I hear, has lost his heart to you, and this is something *I* can give you, and I'm going to give it to you.

"All I ask is that you always take good care of it (it is valuable), and that you remember that it belonged to Grandfather Atherton."

"I will, oh, I *will*," cried Rose, "and I'd rather have it than anything I've ever seen."

And when, after a long, pleasant talk she saw that it was time for her to go, she put on her pretty coat and hat, reached up to offer a kiss to Aunt Judith, and ran down the little path to the gate.

"I'll write you little letters sometimes, Aunt Judith," she said, "and I do thank you, oh, so very much for the lovely pin. I'll never come to Avondale without coming to see you."

She closed the gate, and turned again, and yet again, as she walked up the avenue, to wave her hand.

"I'm sorry to leave her; she misses me," thought Rose.

"I'd think I had a blessing if I had her now," murmured Aunt Judith.

Just before the bend of the road would hide the cottage, Rose turned again, and this time she threw a kiss.

The pin, a quaint heirloom, was greatly admired at Sherwood Hall, and Polly was delighted that the afternoon at the cottage had shown that Aunt Judith really cared for Rose. Polly wished everyone to love Rose.

The first day at school was much like all first days when many new pupils arrive.

But little work was done, and the pupils were merry. The fact that there were few recitations did not trouble them.

Rob confided to Harry at recess that he honestly believed that at least a half dozen schools must be vacant, because their pupils had left and come to Avondale.

The huge number of pupils would have caused anyone to wonder whence they had come.

"I shall not play with any of those strange children," Gwen Harcourt announced; "I've enough friends from my own neighborhood."

It would not have sounded kind under any circumstances, but Gwen made it appear as harsh as possible.

Instead of saying it to one of her own little friends, when alone with her, she took the time when standing very near a group of the new pupils.

In an instant, by that one foolish speech, she made a number of enemies.

Later, after a rather rough game of "Snap-the-whip," with Gwen doing all the "snapping," they sat down to rest.

Polly and Rose never knew just how it

happened, but someone said that she never could bear to search for lost articles, and she said that she found it hard to be patient because she seemed always to be losing something that she valued.

It was then that Gwen spoke.

"People are always losing things," she said, "and some say the things are *lost*, and some say *disappear*. I say *disappear*!"

"Why do you say that word?" Vivian Osborne asked.

"Because half the time they're not lost. They've only *disappeared*," she said.

Several hearing what she had said drew nearer, and now none of the group was seated on the grass.

They had become interested, and all were standing near the gravel walk that divided the girls' yard from that reserved for the boys.

Seeing Gwen the center of a group, a number of the boys had drawn nearer, and stood listening to what she was saying.

"Of course folks are all the time saying that they lose things, and who knows where they go?"

"Sometimes they are just *lost*, and sometimes you can't tell who took them. My papa knew a man once, who could just *wish* he had a thing, and no matter who had it, quicker'n a wink, that very thing he wanted would be in his house.

"I asked papa how he could do it, and he said: 'Oh, he simply fixed his mind on the thing he so wanted, and it came to him.' I mean to fix my mind on things I want, and *get* them just that way!"

"Why, Gwen!" cried Harry Grafton, "anyone would think you were planning to steal like a highwayman!"

"Steal!" cried Gwen, her cheeks very red, and her eyes flashing, while her small hands worked nervously.

"Who said anything about stealing? I said just *fix* my mind on the thing I wanted, and I'd *make* it come to me."

"I'll look out that Harcourt girl doesn't get very near any of *my* things!" said a boy who stood near enough so that Gwen heard what he said.

Inez drew nearer to Gwen, and reaching around another little girl who stood in the way, she touched her shoulder.

"Come away, Gwen," she said; "none of them understand you, but *I* do. Your mamma says it's just your 'magination that makes you say odd things. These boys and girls don't know what real big 'magination *is*!"

Together they walked away from the

laughing crowd, and sat down in a far corner of the yard.

The boys returned to their game of ball, and the girls stood talking of what Gwen had said.

"After what that Harcourt girl said, I wish my desk had a lock and key," said a thin, pale-faced girl to another girl who stood beside her.

"Wasn't she bold to say what she did?" queried the girl who had first spoken.

"I don't know," her friend said doubtfully.

"Well, *I* do," was the quick reply, "for with her big talk about things disappearing, an' her a-wishing them ter come to her is just as bold as it *could* be, an' I'm goin' ter keep a sharp eye on all of my things!"

She was a girl whose untidy appearance

bespoke an ignorant family, and her friend was quite as unattractive.

There were but few such in the school, and they came from a small, but thickly settled district near the mill.

The great mill was on the outskirts of Avondale, and the river seemed like a boundary line that divided that desolate part of the town from the larger and finer district.

The houses there were small, and there were no shrubs to add a bit of summer beauty, no trees to give grateful shade.

CHAPTER VI

WHO WAS IT?

THERE were merry days at school when everything moved smoothly. The teachers and pupils seemed to be in sympathy, and nothing unusual happened until the last day that Rose was to be a visitor.

The days at school with Polly had been delightful. The teachers had liked the little girl whose large dark eyes looked up so thoughtfully whenever her name was called.

Rose was indeed happy.

She had read with the reading class, from the book that Polly held. She had

sung at the music hour, her sweet voice making the music sweeter; she had joined in their games at recess, all her former playmates, and many, many new ones loved her dearly.

Now she was to be at school with Princess Polly but one more day, and on the morrow, she must return to Aunt Rose, to be ready to meet her own teachers the first day of the next week.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Polly on the way to school, "I don't want you to go to-morrow, but then," she added, "I wouldn't *ever* be ready to let you go."

"And I wouldn't ever be ready to go," said Rose, "but we'll have a nice time to-day, just the *niciest* time we can, and perhaps it won't be long before you can come to see me."

They had reached the schoolhouse

door, and seeing no children in the yard, believed that they were late.

They ran in and reached their seats at just one minute of nine.

"Just in time not to be really late," the teacher said, with a smile.

It proved to be a day of odd happenings.

Five boys were very late, coming in when the classes were singing.

One of the girls who had taken her books home the night before, forgot to bring them, and had to return for them.

Gwen Harcourt immediately decided to take her books home every afternoon.

"I could forget them quite often," she thought, "and I'd *love* to go home to get them. I could go so slow that by the time I got back to school, it would be about time to go home."

Few pupils were ready with their lessons, and questions were answered at random.

Someone, by accident, or intention, dropped a pile of books upon the floor, and confusion reigned.

Then, for a time, the room was quiet, and the tired teacher was just wondering how long it might last when a wee girl in the front row uttered a wild shriek, at the same time pointing toward the window.

"What is it, Katie?" the teacher asked kindly, thinking that someone had hurt her.

"Oh, dear! Was it pins, or pinching that made her scream?" thought the weary woman.

But Katie did not answer, and continued to scream.

"Come here to me!" was the quick command, to which Katie replied:

"I can't, I'm afraid to stir."

Now really alarmed, Miss Brandon crossed the room to where the little girl sat crying, and trembling with fear, her face hidden behind her apron that she had thrown upward to shut out whatever the object had been that had frightened her.

"Now, Katie, stop crying," she said, "and tell me why you screamed; did someone hurt you?"

Katie shook her head, kept her apron over her face, but pointed toward the window.

It was some time before the little girl would uncover her face, or tell what had caused her to hide it, but at last the story came out.

"Tell me at once what you saw," said the teacher firmly, "and put your apron down. There's nothing to be seen from the window that could startle anyone."

"Oh, but he was awful!" gasped Katie, still sobbing. "He had on a old hat with feathers sticking up over the top, and he had awful big teeth, and when he showed 'em, an' grinned at me, and turned his eyes in, I couldn't help screeching, for he looked's if he'd jump right through the window at me!"

Miss Brandon walked to the window, and looked out.

"There is no one in sight," she said quietly.

"There *was*! Oh, there *was*!" insisted little Katie, commencing to cry again. It was quite evident that something very real had frightened her.

“Was anyone looking toward the window when Katie screamed?” the teacher asked.

“I was,” said Harry Grafton, “and it was Gyp that scared her, and I should think he would. He had hen’s feathers stuck in all ’round his hat, and the big teeth she saw were just orange peel.”

“And who is Gyp? That can not be his name,” Miss Brandon said, smiling.

“He hasn’t any other,” said Harry.

“And his folks live in a shanty over by the woods,” volunteered another boy.

“And they say they hook ’bout half of what they have to live on!” cried a larger boy, who did not intend to be outdone.

“He says he won’t go to school, ’cause he don’t want to, and he thinks they can’t *make* him,” shouted a small boy in the back row of seats.

“That will do,” said Miss Brandon. “You have given me a very good idea of the sort of person Gyp is, and I will see if he can be prevented from annoying us.”

The pupils were greatly excited by Gyp’s appearance, and many were the whispered comments, and notes exchanged, all telling of Gyp’s various misdoings.

It was impossible to quiet them, or to keep their minds upon their lessons, and Miss Brandon dismissed them at a quarter of twelve, sending one of the larger girls along with frightened little Katie.

There was to be no school in the afternoon, and one small boy said that he heard his father say that there was to be a “Teachers’ *invention*,” that afternoon.

Polly and Rose were delighted that the afternoon was to be theirs, and planned

enough things to do in the few hours to fill a week's time.

How that afternoon and evening flew!

Polly begged to be permitted to sit up a little later than usual, and the evening spent with games and music sped swiftly.

They were asleep as soon as their heads touched their pillows.

A surprising thing happened the next morning.

Rose had expected to take the train that left Avondale at eight, and Mrs. Sherwood and Polly were intending to drive to the station with her.

At seven, Polly, having dressed first, was looking from the chamber window. Rose, sitting upon the rug, was tying her shoe ribbons.

"Why, who could be coming here at seven o'clock?" cried Polly, as a fine car-

riage rolled up the driveway. "I didn't think mamma ever invited guests to be here so early."

"Why, there's nobody in the carriage!" she added, as it drew up at the door.

Rose ran to the window.

"Why, that's Aunt Rose's carriage, and that's our coachman!" she cried. "Why should he be here?"

They hurried out into the upper hall.

The maid was opening the door.

"I've brought this note for Mrs. Sherwood," said the man.

"That *is* James," whispered Rose.

They heard the maid tap at Mrs. Sherwood's door to deliver the note.

Then, in a moment Mrs. Sherwood appeared in the hall.

"This is most unexpected," she said to Rose. "Your aunt has sent for you, as

she feels that you should be at home quite early this forenoon. She explains her haste by saying that your music teacher, who is to train you in both vocal and piano music, has arrived, and he is very eager to meet you."

"Oh, dear, why *do* I have to rush off like that?" cried Rose. "And *vocal* lessons! Why, I can't sing!"

"Perhaps you can, with proper training," said Mrs. Sherwood, with an amused smile.

It seemed to her that Aunt Rose was unduly hasty, but she thought it best not to say so.

"I don't see why eight o'clock isn't just as good as seven," complained Polly.

"Neither do I," agreed Rose, "but when Aunt Rose thinks of *anything* she wants done, it has to be done *that minute*, and

nothing will make her wait. I wish she wouldn't do so!"

There was no way of changing Aunt Rose Atherton's plan, however, and so a hasty breakfast was placed on the dining-room table, and Rose and Polly tried very hard to enjoy it.

Neither was at all eager for the meal, and it was soon over, "good-by" was said, and Rose waved her handkerchief from the carriage window to Princess Polly, who stood on the porch.

Then Polly, sweet Polly, spoke more sharply than she ever had before.

"I don't care!" she cried, her lashes wet with tears, "I do think her Aunt Rose was horrid to send for her like that, and all because an old teacher had come! She might have—"

"Polly! Polly!" Mrs. Sherwood's

voice was as gentle as usual, but reproofing.

"Oh, mamma, I didn't mean to say anything very dreadful about her," Polly said, "but don't you truly think it was unkind to make Rose rush off like that?"

"Perhaps not unkind, for it was only an hour earlier than she had intended to go," said Mrs. Sherwood, "but it surely seemed a little odd. We must not speak harshly, Polly, because Aunt Rose doubtless thought it best."

It was a long ride to the old Atherton house, and all the way Rose wondered why she had been sent for in such haste.

She had supposed when she first went to live with Aunt Rose, that she would soon be acquainted with little girls whom she could enjoy as playmates, and with

whom she would go to school. She soon learned that very different plans had been made for her.

Aunt Rose held the opinion that few, *very* few, families were quite the equal of the Athertons, and she viewed with horror the idea of permitting her little niece to attend the public school, or indeed even a private school.

"But I'm lonesome," Rose had pleaded, "and I want someone to play with. If I went to school I'd soon know ever so many girls and boys, and I want to."

"Many of them would belong to families that I never knew," said Aunt Rose.

"But they *might* be nice," Rose had ventured.

"And they might not," Aunt Rose had replied.

"I'd risk it!" said Rose.

"Rose! You are an Atherton!" Aunt Rose had declared, and poor little Rose had whispered, "I wish I *wasn't*!" but she would not have dared to say that.

She did not really mean it, for daily she realized that *being* an Atherton gave her the beautiful home, the fine clothing, and the right to the love of her dear Uncle John.

Now, as she rode along, she tried to imagine what the new teacher would be like.

She decided that she must look somewhat like Polly's teacher, Miss Brandon.

And when they had reached the house, the maid opened the door, removed Rose's hat and coat, and pointing toward the drawing-room, said:

"They're in there, yer aunt and yer new teacher, and do ye go right in."

Rose pushed the heavy portière aside, and went straight to greet Aunt Rose.

"This, Rose, is the lady who will be your teacher and governess," Aunt Rose said, and the little girl turned to see a pair of pale blue eyes looking sharply at her.

Rose shivered.

"Oh, she doesn't look pleasant at all," she thought.

Miss Glendon returned Rose's gaze, without the faintest effort at a smile, and Rose knew that this was not a pleasant teacher.

She felt that she was a woman who did not love children.

Oh, how could she study with her?

Miss Glendon, having looked at Rose as if she were a piece of furniture, turned, without a word to the little girl, to speak to Aunt Rose.

"The lessons may as well commence to-day," she said, with a voice that showed as little interest as if she had spoken of machinery that she intended to set running.

A room next to Rose's chamber had been chosen for lessons, and study, and it had been refurnished for the purpose while she had been at Sherwood Hall.

Rose never forgot the first day with her new teachers.

Miss Glendon was cold, and far from attractive, and Rose thought that she had never spent so unpleasant a forenoon.

She wondered when it would be time for the teacher to go.

Was every day to be like this?

A lesson in arithmetic occupied the last hour of the session, and its puzzling little problems kept Rose so busy that she for-

got to watch the clock, and was surprised when the maid stopped at the door to announce lunch.

“You may put your books aside,” said Miss Glendon, and Rose waited for no urging.

She wondered why Miss Glendon did not get her wraps. Had Aunt Rose invited her to stay to lunch? She hoped not.

A surprise awaited her.

As she ran down the stairs, followed by Miss Glendon, Aunt Rose came from the drawing-room accompanied by the droll-est looking little man with whom she was talking earnestly.

He proved to be the man whom Aunt Rose had chosen as musical instructor for Rose.

He greeted the little girl kindly, and

seemed to be a more agreeable person than Miss Glendon.

Rose watched him during lunch, and the longer she looked at him, the more she wondered where Aunt Rose had found him.

His light hair was very light, and also very thin and straight. It must have been obstinate as well, because it seemed trying to stand on end, and fully half of it succeeded in doing so.

His pale blue eyes seemed nearly colorless, but as Rose looked from his face to the woman who sat near him, she knew that his was the face of a pleasanter person.

CHAPTER VII

AT LENA'S HOUSE

IT had been planned before Rose returned that she should be with Miss Glendon every forenoon, with the music teacher, Mr. Theophilus Ashton an hour on Saturdays, to recite her piano and vocal lessons, and a half hour each day to practice singing with him.

Aunt Rose did not wish her to sing without him, lest she make a mistake.

Her first music lesson was not very interesting, and when it was over, Rose ran up to her room. She intended to write to Princess Polly and tell her how, at the start, she disliked Miss Glendon,

how droll Mr. Ashton was, and how closely her days were to be filled with lessons and practice.

In the upper hall she met Aunt Rose, and she also saw Miss Glendon enter a small chamber at the end of the hall.

"Isn't she gone *yet?*" Rose asked in surprise.

"*Gone?*" said Aunt Rose; "why she is to be your governess, and will live here all the time."

"Oh, I *wish* she wasn't to stay here!" she cried. "I don't like her, and it'll be *hard* enough to have her here for lessons!"

"Why, Rose!"

"Oh, but she doesn't like little girls, I *know* she doesn't, and to have her here *all* the time—"

A sob completed the sentence.

Aunt Rose was amazed.

She had taken a great fancy to Miss Glendon, and she could not understand why Rose felt such a strong dislike for her.

“You have been very sweet-tempered since you came to live with me,” she said, “and I can’t see why, when your lessons have but just begun, you should be so unhappy about them.”

“The same lessons at school with the other children would seem so different,” Rose said, “and if the teachers weren’t pleasant, I’d leave them when school was out and come home to you and Aunt Lois. Miss Glendon is to be here all the time, so I *can’t* get away!”

As she spoke, she ran to her pretty room, and sat down in her little chair by the window.

“Oh, Uncle John! I wish it was you

I lived with!" she whispered. "Aunt Rose doesn't mean to make me unhappy," she murmured a moment later, "she just doesn't see how unpleasant it is."

Poor little Rose! She was neither stubborn nor unreasonable.

She had longed to enjoy school with other children, and when she learned that she must, instead, have private teachers, she had hoped that they might be pleasant people, who would be interested in her.

The governess was a cold, formal woman who cared little for children, and taught only for the money it would bring.

Rose shrank from her.

No one need ever tell children that she loves them.

They know a loving heart, and tender voice, and their own little hearts respond

as quickly as the flowers open at the kiss of the sun. Quite as quickly do the children know those unlovely people who are not friendly toward them, and from them always, they draw away.

The friendship and love of the children are very precious things.

Dinner proved to be rather dull. Aunt Lois, because of her deafness, rarely attempted to join in conversation; Miss Glendon seemed little inclined to talk, while Rose's mind was so filled with thoughts of what she would write to Polly, that she forgot to speak.

That night, when Dorcas helped her undress, and attempted to turn off the light, she begged her to leave it burning.

"I won't stay up long," she coaxed, "but I must write a letter to my Princess Polly."



"Daintily she tripped along."

The weeks had sped since Rose had made the pleasant little visit to Sherwood Hall.

In place of the gay flowers in the garden, there were snow-clad plants and shrubs, from which hung icy pendants.

Roof and portico, piazza and balcony were covered with a mantle of snow, and from every edge hung a fringe of dazzling icicles.

Truly Sherwood Hall had never looked more lovely.

As if to complete the picture, Princess Polly in a beautiful cloak, hat and furs came down the steps to the driveway.

Daintily she tripped along.

Her cloak was of soft pink, her large picturesque hat the same color, with nodding white plumes, and the furs were ermine.

She was to spend the afternoon with Lena Lindsey, and Leslie Grafton, Inez Varney, and Vivian Osborne were to be there.

It was not a party.

Lena had invited her nearest and dearest playmates to spend the afternoon, and dine with her.

"I don't like to ask Inez, mamma," she had said, "because now, she isn't as pleasant as she used to be."

"But I have often asked you to have your playmates with you for an afternoon, and at dinner," said Mrs. Lindsey, "and always before this, Inez has been one of the little guests. It would not be kind to omit her now."

"I'll ask her," Lena had said, "but truly, I don't believe she'll come. She doesn't play with us very often since

Gwen Harcourt came to Avondale to live."

"Gwen is away just now, visiting her cousin, so Inez may be lonely and like to come," Mrs. Lindsey had said, with a smile.

When Polly arrived, she was a bit late, and Lena, with the other little guests, was looking for her.

"Here's Polly, Princess Polly!" she cried, and Polly, laughing gayly, ran up the steps, and in at the open door.

There was a new game that Lena had just received as a gift, and they were all very eager to play it.

"Any number can play it," she said, "so come here to the table and we'll begin."

It was very amusing, and it was easy to learn, so when the gay little cards with butterflies and flowers upon them, had

been dealt they ceased to chatter, each being determined to play carefully, and so win a prize.

Inez was not with them.

Vivian had whispered to Leslie when they were taking off their wraps that she believed Inez would stay away because Gwen could not be there.

The little players were excited. At one moment it would look as if Lena would surely win. Then Leslie would be the lucky one, and then Lena would seem to be the one for the prize.

"Oh, isn't it fun!" cried Polly.

"And the best of it is, we can't guess how it's coming out!" Lena said.

"It looks now as if Leslie—" Vivian did not finish the sentence, for a sharp ring at the bell was followed by a voice that said, as the door opened;

"Oh, I know I'm late, although I ran almost all the way."

It was Inez, and Lena tried to feel glad that she had come.

"What are you all playing?" she asked.

"A new game that was given me," said Lena. "I'll deal some more cards for you, and you can come right into the game now."

"Oh, you needn't give me any cards," Inez said, bluntly. "I'll watch you play. I don't care for the game."

Lena hesitated.

Which was the right thing to do?

It seemed rude to continue playing and leave Inez to watch them.

Was it not more rude to compel the other guests to stop playing the game that they were enjoying, in order to please Inez?

"I guess as most of us want to play, it's most polite to go right on playing," she thought.

"The game will soon be done," she said to Inez, "so perhaps we'd better finish it."

"Oh, of course," said Inez, with a toss of her head.

"Play for us, Inez," Lena said, for she knew that Inez played very well for a child, and she liked to show what she could do.

Inez seated herself at the piano, and began the prelude to a pretty little piece that she had just learned.

She was still playing, and the small girls at the table were greatly excited at their game, when again the bell rang.

They looked up, and Inez stopped playing, for, in a moment, they all knew who had arrived.

They also knew that she had not been invited.

It was Gwen Harcourt!

Inez stared in amazement. Only a half hour before, Gwen had spoken angrily because she had no invitation, yet here she was, daintily dressed, as if Mrs. Harcourt had believed her to have been invited.

And surely she had been invited,—she had invited herself!

She was not at all abashed, and she entered boldly, her eyes very bright, and her cheeks flushed.

“What are you all doing?” she asked, looking toward the group at the table.

Before they could answer, Inez spoke.

“They’re playing a game that I guess is going to last all night,” she said, “so as I’m left out, I’m glad you’ve come. We can be company for each other.”

"Why, Inez!" said Lena, "we didn't leave you out; we had commenced the game before you came."

"Oh, it's all right, of course," Inez said, but anyone could have seen that she was displeased.

Just at that moment Polly placed upon the table the one card for which the others had been striving.

"Princess Polly has won!" cried Leslie.

It was an amusing game, and those who had played it, thought it would be fine to play again, and see who could win.

Gwen and Inez rudely refused to play, so Lena tried to think of something that they might all enjoy, but nothing that she suggested seemed to please the two unpleasant little guests.

"I'll tell you what we could do," said Gwen. "We could play tableaux!"

"Oh, yes!" said Inez. "They had them at our church Monday evening, and they were fine!"

"I guess we'd all like to do that," said Lena.

She thought it odd that Gwen should choose anything so reasonable. Usually she wished to wildly romp.

"We'll draw the portières," said Gwen, "and all of you take turns making tableaux. Inez and I will make ours, after everyone of you has made one."

As Gwen usually wished to be first in everything, it was safe to guess that she believed that her tableau would be the finest, and that it would show to advantage after all the others had been seen.

Lena posed first, and Leslie opened the portières to show her.

"Say, everyone listen!" she said.

"This is a copy of the painting in the hall. Lena is sitting just like the girl in the picture, only we had to use geraniums in her hands instead of roses."

"Oh, that's fine!" cried the little audience. Loudly they clapped their hands in applause.

"The next is Leslie's, and she's most ready," announced Lena from behind the curtain.

"There!" she cried, as she swung it wide. "This is 'Red Ridinghood,' " and she added; "isn't she just like her?"

Leslie, in Lena's red rain cloak, the hood drawn over her head, and a basket, made a very winsome little lass.

"The next is Polly's," said Lena, "and you'll like it, I know."

"*Why* will we like it?" Gwen asked quickly.

"Oh, because it's so *real*," said Lena.

It took some time to arrange it, and there was much whispering and hurrying about before everything was complete.

Mrs. Lindsey came in to see this tableau, and she chatted with the small girls who sat waiting.

"The name of this picture is 'Princess Polly,' and she's wearing what we think she *ought* to wear all the time," said Lena.

Truly it proved to be a pretty picture. A big box had been brought into the hall, turned upside down, and then covered with a rich, red rug.

On the little throne thus made, stood the carved hall chair, its high back far above Polly's sunny head, and in the chair sat Polly.

She wore what seemed to be a long red velvet mantle. It was an old opera cloak

that Mrs. Lindsey had loaned them.

On her curly head rested a lovely crown.

Oh, but she looked every inch a princess!

How they wondered about that crown, until Mrs. Lindsey told them what it was.

"That crown looks very fine," she said; "I did not guess what it was when I first saw it, but now I know. It is my old gilt belt clasped around Polly's head. You are a sweet little princess, dear."

Vivian posed as a nun, and made a very demure little figure, in a long gray cloak, a white handkerchief folded across her forehead.

Mrs. Lindsey did not see Vivian, because she had left the room to receive a lady who had called upon her.

Gwen whispered to Inez, in great excitement.

"Oh, I *hoped* she'd go pretty soon, for if she'd stayed she *might* have stopped the tableau," she said.

"Oh, Gwen!" Inez whispered, in reply, "you really *mustn't* do it much!"

"Who said I *should*?" Gwen snapped, and the preparations went on.

"Hurry *up*!" cried the impatient audience, beginning to clap.

"We *are* hurrying," replied Gwen.

Then they heard more whispering.

"I can't get it, because I'm 'fraid to," whispered Inez.

"Oh, you're a fraidie cat!" whispered Gwen. "I'll get it myself!"

She had been out to the stable, and the tool house adjoining it, and, after much hunting, had found an old watering pot.

Four trips upstairs to the bathroom had been made, with a large pitcher, borrowed

from the dining-room, and now the watering pot was nearly full.

The two little imps were now so excited that they began to laugh, and could not stop.

Inez, in Lena's raincoat, and rubbers, stood holding up her skirts, as if, short as they were, they must be lifted when walking out.

Gwen stood on the hall table that she had pushed close behind Leslie.

What *was* she intending to do?

"This tableau is called 'A Rainy Day,' " cried Gwen, from behind the curtain, "and I'm busy, so someone'll have to pull the portière away."

She shouted as if in a great hurry, so Polly ran forward, and drew it aside.

"Look!" cried Gwen. "Isn't this *natural?*"

Down poured the water from the watering pot that she held above Inez' head, over the red cloak, and plashing upon the polished floor.

"Isn't this the *realest* tableau?"

She stepped too near the edge of the table, and girl, and watering pot came down in a heap in the middle of the puddle that Gwen had thought made the downpour "real."

Then all was confusion.

Mrs. Lindsey, whose caller had already gone, rushed to the hall, while two maids came from another direction.

The children were too frightened to stir, and sat still in their chairs, watching, with wide eyes, while Gwen and Inez were picked up, and the maids tried to gather up bits of broken ornaments, and to take up the water that lay on the floor.

CHAPTER VIII

GYP

OF course the story of Gwen's tableau reached the school.

Not one of the little playmates had told about it, so each wondered how nearly everyone could know what had happened at Lena's house.

Gwen and Inez were absent, so they did not dream that any children, except those who were there, knew anything about it.

Mrs. Lindsey had been very kind and patient, but Gwen had stoutly refused to stay, and with a cloak borrowed from Lena, she had hurried home.

Inez had refused to remain after Gwen

started for home, and went with her for company.

The day proved to be an exciting one. Polly often said that she did not like quiet days at school, because those were the ones when nothing happened.

It was Friday noon. The morning had been spent in speaking, singing, piano solos, and the children, on their way home from school, talked of the pieces to which they had listened.

"Your piece was lovely, Polly," Vivian said, "and I liked the part where it told about the fairies dancing on the grass."

"And I liked yours," said Polly, "and Vivian!" she called, as she turned toward home, "call for me this afternoon."

"I will," cried Vivian, "and I'll come early."

A half hour before school time, Vivian

ran up the steps to the piazza. Polly, who was watching for her, flew out to join her, and the two little friends ran down the driveway together, sliding whenever they found a bit of ice that was smooth.

"I've a letter from Rose," said Polly, "and I do wish her aunt hadn't wanted to have private teachers for her. Rose doesn't like it at all."

"I shouldn't think she would," Vivian said, "for from the time she first went there to live, she said it was dull and lonely, and I thought she'd be going to school, and that would help."

"Oh, but you don't know how horrid it is!" said Polly.

"The lady teacher isn't pleasant at all, and Rose says she *knows* she doesn't like little girls, and what *do* you think? Her name is Miss Glendon, and she stays

there, right in the house, *all* the time. Her aunt calls her a 'governess,' and now she wants her to walk out with Rose whenever she goes out. Just think! That's like being a little tiny girl, and always having a maid with her."

"Why, then she'll always have either Aunt Rose, or Miss —— what did you say her name was?" Vivian asked.

"*Glendon*, Miss Glendon, and Rose said she thought she couldn't bear it when she knew she'd have to have her for a teacher, and when she found she was to be right in the house with her all the time, she told her Aunt Rose how badly she felt," concluded Polly.

"Well, if she knows how Rose feels, why doesn't she get a different teacher?" Vivian asked.

"Why, Rose says her aunt thinks Miss

Glendon is fine, and she thinks Rose is just *queer* not to like her," said Polly.

"Oh, dear," sighed Vivian, "I'm sure I'd rather be going to school here at Avondale, than living in that great, big, handsome house, and having Miss *Grindon* poking round all the time!"

"Oh, oh!" laughed Polly. "It isn't *Grindon*; it's Glendon."

Vivian laughed, too, and now they turned the corner to go up a long avenue to school.

"We could go through the little grove," said Polly. "There's a path in the snow, trodden by men and boys that have been through there. It looks pretty in summer in the grove, and it's almost as pretty now, with the snow and ice. Will you go that way?"

"Of course I will," cried Vivian, "and,

say, Polly! Let's run so we can walk slowly through the grove, and still have time to go to school."

Down the avenue they raced, Polly ahead, but Vivian close behind her, both laughing, and holding onto their hats that the breeze tried to capture.

Vivian caught up with her, just at the entrance to the grove.

"Oh, isn't it beautiful!" cried Princess Polly, clasping her hands, and looking first at the ice-covered underbrush, and then glancing up at the trees clad in glittering armor.

"It looks as if it might be the jewel cave that you read about, where the elves and the brownies lived," said Vivian.

"And see the little snowdrift at the foot of that tree, and the little bush near it, all weighted down with ice," said Polly.

"Oh, if this was Saturday, we'd stay here all the afternoon."

"We can be here a little while, I know, because I called early for you, and we haven't been out long," said Vivian.

"No, we haven't," agreed Polly, "and we ran part of the way. The path goes around those two birch trees; let's follow it, and come out where those slender bushes are sparkling in the sun."

They ran along the path, talking and laughing until they had nearly reached the birches, when Polly stopped, and shook her finger at Vivian.

"Hush-sh-sh!" she whispered. "Look!"

Vivian looked, and caught her breath. A great tree hid the two little girls, and peeping out from behind it, they saw a little bonfire, around which an imp-like figure was dancing.

There was no mistaking his identity; he was Gyp—wild, mischievous Gyp. Over the fire hung a small piece of meat that swung from a rusty hook, made from a piece of heavy wire.

The hook was fastened to one end of a long, slender iron chain. The other end of the chain Gyp had slipped over a small tree branch.

Round and round the fire he danced, hopping and capering as if he were frantic with delight.

Was he so wildly happy because he was anticipating the taste of the meat that sizzled over the blazing fire?

Faster, and yet faster he danced, and what was he singing?

“Jing! Jing! Jing! Jing!
Now I dance, and *now* I sing!
Fire blazing cooks the meat,
When it's ready, *how I'll eat!*”

Then uttering little cries, and still dancing wildly around the fire, he seemed like a hobgoblin, rather than a mere boy.

Polly clasped Vivian's hand.

"Isn't he queer?" she whispered.

"Yes, and sort of horrid, too. It scares me to watch him, and I *can't* look away!" Vivian said with a little shiver.

"That's why I wish he'd stop that awful dancing," said Polly, "'cause we'll watch him just so long as he skips around that fire, and I don't know why it is, but he seems frightful, like a demon, or an imp."

"He does!" whispered Vivian, "and if he'd only,—oh, *look!*"

With a long stick, Gyp was trying to take the piece of meat from the hook.

Patiently he worked, but every time the ick touched it, it would swing away on

its long chain, and then return to its old place over the fire.

He grew angry and struck at the bit of meat; it fell from the hook into the now smoldering fire.

Like a little wild creature, he darted forward, snatched the meat, and trampled the fast dying embers with feet that beat and stamped as if in perfect frenzy.

Then crouching upon a heap of dry leaves, he tore the meat into pieces that he ate ravenously, as if he feared that someone might, at any moment, hasten toward him, and ask for a mouthful.

Polly and Vivian held their breath. They had not dreamed, when they had entered the grove, that Gyp was anywhere to be seen, yet they knew if he should see them, he would say that they were spying.

They were beginning to feel cramped.

Would he *never* stop eating, and run off?

They leaned still farther out from behind the tree that hid them.

“S’pose we’ll be late to school?” whispered Vivian.

Gyp looked up, saw the two little faces peeping at him, and sprang from the ground, his angry eyes flashing.

“D’ye want a piece er my meat?” he shouted, “’cause ye won’t get it, but I’ll take this stick, an’—”

On through the grove they ran, over ice and snow, sometimes having to force their way through underbrush, and when, at last, they reached the school-house, there was not a child in the yard, and they knew that they were late.

Not once during their long run had they looked back, so sure were they that Gyp was following them.

Even at the school-house door they did not stop to learn if he were near them, but hurried in, not sure that they were safe until the door had closed behind them.

Miss Brandon readily excused them when they told her what a fright they had had.

"I would not go through the grove, however charming it may appear," she said, kindly, "but, instead, come up the broad avenue."

They were only too glad to promise.

Nothing could have induced them to follow again the path through the grove.

At recess they told their playmates about Gyp, and some of the children thought it would have been fine to have seen him, and quite envied Polly and Vivian. They thought it must have been so exciting to be really scared.

"I guess you *wouldn't* have liked it," said Vivian, "if you'd been there, and felt as if any minute he'd put his hands on you, or poke you with a long stick!"

"And he *truly* didn't look like a real boy, when he was dancing around that fire," said Polly, "and I told Vivian he looked like an imp."

Gwen Harcourt and Inez had been absent in the morning, but they had both come in the afternoon, and now stood with the others, listening to what Polly and Vivian were telling of their adventure in the grove.

Gwen soon tired of listening. She usually preferred to talk, and have others listen.

"Let's go back to the school-room," she said, "teacher'll let us, and it's cold out here."

Miss Brandon had said that any pupils who wished to remain in at recess might do so.

It was cold, and the breeze was raw, so the little group moved across the yard toward the door, Gwen leading the way. Wraps were soon hung up, and a little group formed near the front row of seats.

Polly never remembered what they were talking about, but she did remember that Gwen was in the center of the group, when one of the larger girls cried out:

“Why, where’s my ring? It was on my desk just a moment ago.”

“How does she s’pose we know where it is?” Gwen asked, with a saucy laugh.

“But it’s too bad if she’s lost it,” said Polly. She wondered why Gwen liked to be so rude.

“Too bad!” cried Gwen. “Why do you

say that, Polly Sherwood? She doesn't even know it *is* lost yet."

"Princess Polly isn't likely to be *glad* when folks lose things," said Rob Lindsey, who had joined the group.

Just then the bell rang, and the pupils returned to their seats.

"I wouldn't wonder if that Harcourt girl could tell where that ring is," said an awkward, overgrown girl, who had been listening to the chatter of the smaller girls.

"What makes yer think so?" questioned a thin, dark girl, who stood near her, adding: "'Tain't a very fine thing ter say."

"I ain't often heard saying fine things about that Harcourt girl, am I?" she said.

They both laughed in a disagreeable way, and took their seats.

Weeks had passed, and now the fortnight's vacation had arrived.

It usually included Christmas, but this year Christmas had occurred on Saturday, and the school was to be closed for the two weeks following.

All eyes were turned toward Sherwood Hall, where great pleasure was promised for the Wednesday evening of the second week.

The children had planned enough amusement to last at least a month, but a party, a costume party, was to be given at Sherwood Hall, and from the first day that the news had been heralded, the children talked of little else.

Whether at play together, or when little friends met on the avenue, or on a street corner, the first remark was sure to be: "What are you going to wear?"

They had all heard that Princess Polly was to wear something very wonderful,

but what it was they could not find out.

Mrs. Sherwood had sent the invitations out early, that each who accepted might have plenty of time to choose her costume, and have it made for her.

Nearly every day some bit of news regarding the anticipated party made those who were invited even more eager for the wonderful evening to come.

The latest news to delight them was told, or rather shouted, by Harry Grafton, who ran half the way down the avenue to overtake Lena and Rob, and tell it.

"Oh, say, wait a minute!" he cried. "Do you know that Rose Atherton is coming over to Sherwood Hall for the party?"

"Oh, but that's good news," said Rob.

"Polly told me she *hoped* Rose could come," said Lena, "but she wouldn't feel sure 'til she heard from her."

"Well, she *has* heard from her, and she just told Leslie, and Leslie told me, so I ran to overtake you, and now I've told you," Harry said, with a laugh.

"Oh, did Leslie say what Rose is to wear?" Lena asked.

"No, and what's funnier, Princess Polly doesn't know. Rose's aunt says her costume will be 'eminently proper.' What does that mean?" Harry asked.

"I don't know," Rob admitted, "but it doesn't sound very *fancy*, does it?"

"But Rose has lovely frocks now, so *whatever* her party frock is, it will be fine, of course," Lena said.

The next bit of news was told by Vivian Osborne.

"There's loads of laurel and evergreen and holly gone up to Sherwood Hall," she cried, on the day before the party, "and I

heard the maid tell the man who brought it, that he must bring another load of it. Won't it look lovely if it's all decorated with green, and the bright red holly berries?"

"Oh, Sherwood Hall always looks beautiful," said Lena, "but I *do* think the real Christmas looking decorations will make it very grand."

Wednesday, at noon, there was even greater excitement.

Some of the children had seen Rose smiling and waving her hand from the carriage window, and they had hastened to tell their friends that she was on the way to Sherwood Hall.

Princess Polly was looking for her, and ran to greet her when the butler opened the door.

CHAPTER IX

THE COSTUME PARTY

LAUGHING gayly, they ran up the stairway, the butler following with the suitcase, a large hatbox, and a small bag.

“There!” cried Rose, pointing to her baggage. “Wouldn’t you think I was to stay a week, instead of to-night, and just half of to-morrow?”

“Oh, Rose! Do you have to go right back?” said Polly. “I wanted you for the rest of this week. Don’t you know mamma said so in her letter?”

“Why, yes,” said Rose, “and you *do* know, Polly, I’d love to stay, but I can’t,

because Aunt Rose won't let me. I'm to keep right on with my lessons all winter. She says with private teachers I don't need vacations. I don't see why. I think I need them *more*, because I feel as if I had those teachers with me almost every minute. One of them stays at our house all the time, and I just can't bear to be where she is."

Rose sighed, and after a second she spoke again.

"Aunt Rose says I *ought* to like my tutors. *She* does, and she says she's thankful that neither of them is frivolous. I don't know what that means, but if it would make Miss Glendon nicer, then I *do* wish she was frivolous, whatever it is!"

While Rose talked, and Polly listened, the maid unpacked the suitcase, and from it took a quaint little flowered gown, some

long mitts, a pair of satin slippers of the same tint as the gown.

From the tiny hatbox came a dainty wreath, and a bouquet of fine artificial flowers.

“Oh, what a dear costume!” cried Polly. “What is it to represent?”

“It is a real, old-time frock that was worn years and years ago by the first little girl in our family who was named ‘Rose Atherton,’ and Aunt Rose wished me to wear it,” Rose said.

“You’ll look sweet in it,” declared Polly, “and my costume is to be ready in about an hour, and I’ll show it to you then. Mamma is out just now, and when she comes in she’ll be so glad to see you; but while we wait for her, let’s sit in the cushioned window and talk.”

They ran to their favorite window, and

each snuggled into a corner, with a soft pillow at her back.

“Now, tell me what your teachers look like,” said Polly.

“Well, I told you, in my letters, that Miss Glendon wasn’t pleasant, and she doesn’t *look* pleasant. Her eyes look right through you, and her mouth doesn’t ever smile. She follows me every step!

“I don’t know whether Aunt Rose tells her to, or whether she likes to, but, anyway, she does it and I wish she wouldn’t. Oh, Polly, it’s so queer to feel as if someone, all the time, kept step with you, and always watched you!”

“Oh, I know I wouldn’t like it,” said Polly, with ready sympathy, “and I wonder why she does it?”

For a few moments the two little friends were silent. Then Polly spoke.

“What does the other teacher look like?” she asked.

“He’s funny and his hair stands right up, as if it was on end, and when he sings, his eyes stick out, and I have to look away, or I’d surely laugh. Truly, Princess Polly, when he sings he looks as if he were scared!”

“But does he sing nicely?” Polly questioned.

“Oh, yes, his voice is fine,” said Rose, “and it *sounds* fine, if you don’t look at him. Just the minute you see his face, you forget all about his voice, because he looks so funny. You keep wondering if his eyebrows *could* go any higher.”

“You said he was kind, though,” said Polly.

“He *was* kind, always until a little while ago. Now, he’s always talking with

Miss Glendon. And he talks to her so softly that I don't hear what he says, but now he watches me almost as much as she does.

"Oh, let's not talk about them," she concluded, "because I don't want to think of them while I'm here."

"To-night will be the party, and to-morrow,—oh, to-morrow we can talk about it," said Polly, "and we'll have the loveliest time possible out of this little visit."

Evening had come. The great lamps on the gateposts at the entrance to the broad driveway, vied with a hundred bright-hued electric lights that swung from the trees, like giant holly berries. Each seemed trying to give greater radiance than the other, and from porch and piazza blazed even larger lights that cast rainbow hues upon the snow that lay

like a white cloak over lawn and terrace.

Indoors the lights seemed even brighter, and everywhere garlands of evergreen and holly hung in graceful festoons, and flowers bloomed everywhere. In the hall that had been decorated to look like an oriental apartment, Princess Polly and Rose Atherton stood waiting to greet their friends. The little hostess was indeed a lovely princess to-night.

Polly's frock was of soft white satin, and on her sunny hair rested a jeweled crown that sparkled as if countless dew-drops formed its gems. Around her waist was a slender girdle, as brilliant as her crown, and in the satin bows of her slippers twinkled buckles that had been studded with gems like those in the girdle and crown.

Beside her stood Rose, and her gown of

pale blue, with roses thickly strewn upon it, her wreath from beneath which her brown curls peeped, made her a quaint little maid.

"There's someone!" cried Polly. "They're coming now! Hear the sleigh-bells?"

"Oh, yes, and I guess it's Rob and Lena," said Rose. "And hark! There are other bells jingling!"

The first guests to arrive were Rob Lindsey, and his sister, Lena.

Rob, as a small copy of John Alden, and Lena as Priscilla made a very winsome little couple, and following them closely came pages, fairies, elves, Indians, sailors, Dutch peasants, and a host of merry laughing girls and boys in every known costume.

"I wonder where Leslie and Harry are?"



“They’re coming now!” cried Polly. “Hear the sleigh-bells!”

Rose said, to which Polly whispered:

“Here they come, now!”

Harry Grafton in a black velvet suit, black silk hose, buckled shoes, and a great white ruff, made a fine little German baron of long ago, while his sister, Leslie, in a soft yellow satin frock, and an equally stiff, white ruff, looked as if intended for a dainty baroness.

They were greeting Polly and Rose, when a tiny figure darted forward, flitting between Harry and Leslie until she reached Polly.

“Oh, Polly, Polly!” she cried. “*See me! I’m a white tulip! A white tulip! Would you know it? Tell me—would you?*”

“Oh, Dolly Burton, you little cunning blossom!” cried Polly. “Of course I’d know it. Your skirt looks just like a

tulip, and you couldn't look nicer or dearer."

"Then may I stand beside you for a *few* minutes, just a *very* few minutes, so I can shake folks' hands, and say I'm glad to see 'em?" she asked, her little hands tightly clasped, and her blue eyes very eager.

"Oh, Dolly, you *mustn't*!" cried Blanche, who had rushed forward, intending to catch wee Dolly by the hand. She had not dreamed what her little sister had intended to do, but as Dolly was always doing unexpected things, Blanche thought it safe to follow her.

"Let her stay here between Rose and me," said Polly.

"*Now* you'll let me!" cried Dolly. "Everyone has to do as Princess Polly says!"

She nodded her curly head, and held up

her wee forefinger, as she spoke, and she looked very wise.

Some of the boys and girls who had already been received, passed again, to please wee Dolly, and take her tiny hand, as if she were, indeed, one of the receiving party.

"Oh, my! I didn't know how glad I was to see everyone!" she cried. "I'm glad to see you all!"

"I haven't seen Inez," Polly whispered, a moment later, but little Dolly heard her.

"There she is now!" she said. "And she looks like 'Bo-peep' in my picture book, and there's Gwen, an' she's 'nother Bo-peep! What makes 'em *bofe* look cross?"

Truly it was surprising to see two dainty "Bo-peeps," each pouting unpleasantly.

Neither showed any desire to be received.

Oddly enough, these two small girls who had been so very intimate, now stood apart, neither apparently willing to speak to the other.

Blanche Burton, as a Turkish girl, looked very like a little oriental.

Feeling that her wee sister was safe from mischief while she clung closely to Polly, she crossed the room to where the sulky "Bo-peeps" were standing.

"You don't look gay like the others, but your costumes are lovely.

"How happened you to dress alike?" she asked.

"We didn't happen to!" declared Gwen. "She found out what my costume was, and went and had one made like it!"

"I didn't!" said Inez, "and I've said so to her 'til I'm tired, but she won't believe me. I had mine made before I heard any-

thing about her frock, and I guess I couldn't change it *then!*"

"Why, how sil—"

Blanche did indeed think them silly but she thought best not to finish the sentence. Instead, she said:

"Come, girls! You're not having a nice time at all. You look just like 'Tweedledum and Tweedle-dee.' If you don't stop acting like that *somebody'll* laugh at you."

She was larger than either Gwen or Inez, and they listened to what she said.

Was she right, they wondered?

"Her costume just spoils mine!" cried Gwen, to which Inez added:

"'Tisn't mine spoils hers; it's hers spoils mine!"

"Then don't keep so close together," said Blanche, "and you needn't go together, to greet Polly and Rose."

As if the new idea pleased them, Inez turned toward the other end of the room, where she soon was talking with some girls whom she knew, while Gwen, finding herself alone, turned toward Polly, and soon received a cheery greeting.

Inez, when she knew that Gwen had been presented, hastened forward with her new friends, and soon she was wishing Polly "many happy returns."

Now from the hall soft music was sounding, and it invited them to dance. Rob Lindsey claimed Polly, Harry Grafton took Rose Atherton, and soon the room seemed alive with light and color.

After several numbers had been danced to soft music, two newcomers, late in arriving, were looking for Polly.

They finally found her sitting with several of her friends, under an evergreen

bower, in the center of the drawing-room.

"Oh, Lester! Lester Jenks!" she cried, when she saw the boy, and out went two white hands to greet him.

"This is my cousin, Evangeline Jenks," Lester said, and it was easy to see that he felt no joy in presenting her.

Polly assured Evangeline that she was very glad that she had come, but the strange child seemed neither pleased, nor displeased.

She stared stupidly at Princess Polly for a moment, and then, turning, said:

"Oh, there's Rose Atherton!"

She turned toward Rose, and Lester stood talking with Polly.

Lester was dressed as a brave little hunter of the olden time, a green velvet suit, russet shoes, and cap, and a long bow, making a very striking costume.

He was a handsome boy, and, beside him, his cousin looked insignificant.

She was dressed as a little Greek muse, and carried a quill and a roll of parchment in her hand.

She could not have been contented with any other costume. She felt that the quill and parchment were almost a badge, and she hoped, and believed that all who saw her would *know* that she was a poet.

Judge of her disgust when little Dolly Burton ran up to her, and stared at her a moment with round eyes.

Then her sweet voice piped in a clear treble, so that everyone heard her, and was it strange that they laughed?

"*Why* do you carry that hen's feather, 'Vangeline?'" she asked.

The small gray eyes looked sharply at her through the glasses.

"It's a quill, a pen to write poetry with," Evangeline explained more patiently than one would have expected.

"Oh," cried Dolly, "what kind of poetry do you make? The kind that's in my 'Mother Goose Book'?"

"It's 'nough sillier than *that*!" muttered the disgusted Lester.

Evangeline said nothing, but walked away, amidst roars of laughter.

Lester and his cousin had both been invited, and Lester had stoutly said that he would rather stay at home than take Evangeline. Much to his surprise, his mother had promptly told him that he must decide which he would do. Go with Evangeline, or stay at home.

"Oh, if it's *that* way," Lester had replied, "I'll go, and take her, but I do hate to. She's such a silly."

“*Lester!*” His mother’s voice was reproachful.

“Well, I know that didn’t sound nice,” said the boy, “but she’ll look like a ninny, stopping every little while in some corner to write some of her everlasting old poetry!”

“I’ll see what I can do about that,” his mother had said, and so well did she succeed that Evangeline agreed to leave her notebook and pencil at home.

At first she had refused, but when she was told that she might represent the spirit of poetry, and carry a quill, she agreed. The quill had satisfied her vanity.

Mrs. Sherwood stood watching the happy children, when Rob Lindsey approached her, and seemed to be asking a favor.

The soft music ceased, and Rob's voice was plainly heard.

"*May* we, Mrs. Sherwood?" he asked.

"If you wish," she answered, with a smile.

Then, Rob turned, with bright eyes, and a gay laugh toward his playmates.

"Let us give 'Three cheers' for Princess Polly! Long may she reign!"

With a will were they given, and Polly Sherwood made a graceful courtesy in acknowledgment.

"How good you are to me," she cried, when the cheering ceased.

"You're the best girl in the world!" cried Rob, "and we want you to know we think so."

"I love you all!" cried Polly, and then as the violins commenced to play a dreamy waltz, Rob claimed her for his little part-

ner, Harry Grafton drew Rose out into the center of the floor, and the others following, filled the room with moving color.

"Now, let us all march, in couples, toward the dining-room," Mrs. Sherwood said, when the waltz was finished.

In the center of the long table was a miniature lake on which tiny lilies floated. It delighted the children, who thought it the loveliest thing that they had ever seen.

How they talked, and laughed, as they enjoyed the ices, and cakes, the fruit, and bon-bons. Surely there was never a merrier party, and of them all none was gayer than dear, loving little Princess Polly. With Rob on one side, and Rose Atherton on the other, she seemed every inch a princess, with attendants around her, talking and laughing like a lovely little sprite.

Something caused her to turn, and she

saw a face peeping in at the gay scene, a face that she knew, and while she looked, the thin figure shivered.

"Oh, s'cuse me," she whispered, and slipping from her place at the table, she flew to the door.

"Quick, Marcus! Quick!" she cried. He opened the door. "Who was it who ran?"

"Gyp! Gyp!" she cried softly, and hearing her voice he returned.

"I thought yer big manservant was after me," he muttered. "What made yer call me?"

Even now he longed to run away, but could not because the sight of the radiant little figure held him.

"It's my party, Gyp, and I want to give you something nice. Marcus!"

She laid her soft hand on Marcus' arm.

“Get him some cakes, and some hot chocolate, will you? Oh, Marcus, *will* you?”

“Sure, Miss Polly, anything for you,” was the quick reply, then to the boy he said:

“Come round to the side door, lad, and, for Miss Polly’s sake, I’ll get the cook to give ye a treat.”

“Nobody’ll *keep* me?” cried Gyp, in sudden fear.

“Sure *not*,” replied Marcus. “What’d we want ter keep ye fer?”

Gyp saw the point, and felt safe.

What, indeed, would they want of such a little scape-grace as he at Sherwood Hall?

After he had sat by the great range in the kitchen, and devoured a huge amount of cakes, and numerous cups of hot coffee, he hastened away, warmed and cheered

and full of pleasant thoughts of Princess Polly.

"She twinkled and sparkled," he muttered on his way to the shanty, "an' she *made* him gi' me a treat."

After the spread, there were games, and more music, and dancing, and then, though they were loth to leave, the time had come to say "Good-night."

"Oh, but it's been the *dearest* party we ever went to," said Lena, and, indeed, all the little guests told Polly how happy she had made them.

Long after their costumes had been laid aside, and the lights turned off, Polly and Rose lay talking of the party, and so tired were they, that they dropped asleep in the midst of what they were saying.

CHAPTER X

WHAT THE OLD CLOCK SANG

IT was hard for Polly to say, "Good-by," and harder yet for Rose to say it, and leave cheery Sherwood Hall, and ride toward home. For home meant lessons, under unpleasant conditions.

Rose was a bright pupil and she enjoyed her studies, but her teachers were not well chosen, and they were neither kind nor considerate.

All through the long two hours' ride she thought of Princess Polly, of sweet Mrs. Sherwood, of the bright hours of the party, and of all the merry playmates left behind.

She thought of Uncle John, dear, kindly, loving Uncle John. How happy she had been with him during her visit to his home at the shore.

His villa had been rightly named, "The Cliffs," and gay indeed had been the summer days spent there.

He had been so affectionate, so generous, and had given her the first love that she had ever known!

He had promised to try to plan a way in which he could spend a part of the year with her, and he had made her promise not to speak of it to Aunt Rose until he gave her permission.

But she had not seen him since the visit, and she wondered if, after all, he had found it quite impossible.

Could it be that she would rarely see him, and that she would have to live al-

ways with Aunt Rose, and have Miss Glendon with her every day, indoors, and out?

"If only I could go to school with other children, so I could have little friends to play with, I'd be quite happy with Aunt Rose and Aunt Lois, though,—I *do* love Uncle John best, and he loves me," she whispered.

Miss Glendon was waiting for her at the door.

She did not smile when she saw Rose, nor did she say a word of greeting, but, for the moment Rose forgot how cold Miss Glendon was.

"Oh, I've had such a lovely time," she cried, "and the party was the finest party, and Princess Polly was dear!"

"You may go right up to the study, and take your coat and hat off up there," said

Miss Glendon, "and then we'll take up the lessons that have been interrupted."

Rose looked up as if she had been struck, and her lip quivered.

"I'll stop, and tell Aunt Rose about my visit," she said. "*She'll* be glad to hear."

"Your Aunt Rose is out, and she said you should begin lessons as soon as you returned."

Rose was not obstinate, but it did seem hard to come home, and find no one who could listen to the story of the party.

"Please let me tell Aunt Lois, then?" she asked. "I won't be but a *minute*."

"Miss Rose, will you go up to the study-room, as I say?"

Rose went, without a word, but her eyes were downcast and her lashes wet.

"Why had Aunt Rose gone out just at the time that I would get home? She

would have been glad to see me if she'd been my mamma, and I, her little girl," thought Rose.

She wondered why Miss Glendon had been more unkind than usual.

It seemed harder to have her so cold on the day of her home-coming than it would have at any other time.

She sat down at her little desk, and tried to study, but her mind traveled back to Sherwood Hall, and Polly, and the problems that Miss Glendon had given her were still unsolved.

"Your mind isn't on your work, Miss Rose."

The sharp voice made Rose start.

"I don't approve of parties for children," she continued, "for all such pleasures fill their minds with thoughts that have nothing to do with education."

“And give us something *fine* to think of,” said Rose quickly.

Miss Glendon chose to say nothing in reply.

Rose bent over her book, and with pencil and paper strove to solve the problems, but they seemed impossible. Try as she would, not one of the ten would “come out right.”

Impatiently she tore the paper to bits, and taking another piece, tried again.

It was useless. She was really unfit for study.

Her unhappy home-coming had made her wretched.

With Polly, all had been love and sunshine, and Rose felt the difference keenly.

Princess Polly had been wild with delight at her coming.

Aunt Rose had not even remained in

long enough to see her when she had returned.

To make matters worse, Miss Glendon had never been in a more unpleasant mood.

She had even disapproved of Princess Polly's beautiful party!

While Sherwood Hall had been all joy, and gladness, the great Atherton house had seemed dark and forbidding.

Sherwood Hall's latticed windows had let in cheery sunshine.

When she returned, the shades at the Atherton house, were, as usual, drawn to exclude any sunlight, and the great hall clock that ticked on the shadowy landing seemed singing a gloomy song.

"Tick! Tock! Tick! Tock!

I can tell,—for I'm the clock.

There's no time for loving,—Tick!

Get your books,—and get them quick!"

"*I wish it would stop!*" cried Rose, and then, before she knew it, down plashed the tears upon her book.

"It's plain to see that the visit and the party have completely upset you," said Miss Glendon.

"You may lay aside your books, but I wish you to remain here, at your desk, and think how you've wasted this morning."

She left the room, and Rose, laying her arms upon the desk, hid her face in them, and cried as if her little heart would break.

For a few moments, only her sobs could be heard.

Then the monotonous ticking of the clock made itself heard, and ever so little she lifted her head and listened.

"Oh, it's singing the very same thing it sung when I first came in," she whispered.

“There’s no time for loving,—Tick!”

“There isn’t! There isn’t in *this* house!” she whispered.

“In other fine houses folks love each other, but here it’s different. Aunt Rose buys fine things for me to wear, but she doesn’t buy them because she loves me. She always says I’m an Atherton, and I must dress as an Atherton should.”

Again she laid her tired head upon her arms.

Again she listened to the ticking of the tall old clock on the stairway.

“Tick! Tock! Tick! Tock!

I can tell,—for I’m the clock.

There’s no need of love, or fun,

If you’re born an Ather-ton.”

“Oh, there *is* need of love. It’s so lonely without it. Uncle John is an Atherton, and he can love. He *does*, for he loves me, and he said he wished me to

be with him. Oh, when will he take me? Can he have forgotten what he meant to do? Has he tried to plan it, and failed, or has Aunt Rose refused to listen to the plan, whatever it might be?"

She sat very still for a time, her elbows on her desk, and her chin in her hands.

Her head ached, and her throbbing temples forced her to sit upright.

They ached worse when she laid her head down upon her arms.

Hark! The street door had opened, and closed. Was that Aunt Rose?

Would she say she was glad to see her?

Would she, because her head ached so badly, permit her to leave the school-room?

Someone had come up the stairway, had passed the door, instead of coming in. Someone was talking, speaking so low

that it was hard to hear what was being said.

Was it Aunt Rose?

A moment later she heard a sentence that plainly told who the speaker was.

"She has done nothing with her lessons since she came home this morning," said the voice, in tones that were barely audible.

"That's Miss Glendon," thought Rose. "I wonder what Aunt Rose will answer?"

"You have a hard time training her, and *I* find her obstinate when I give her a music lesson."

"Why that *isn't* Aunt Rose! That's Mr. Ashton. Oh, he *never* told me I was naughty, and obstinate!"

"She must be made to give up pleasures until she is older. Study is enough for her now," murmured Miss Glendon.

"I agree with you," Mr. Ashton replied. "Now the child has no voice for singing, but her aunt is determined to have what voice she has trained. Her *attempts* at singing are really very droll."

She heard the two laugh softly, and her cheeks burned.

They were laughing at her!

"I will not sing for him again!" Rose whispered angrily. "I did not think he would be mean enough to laugh at me."

They had moved farther down the hall, and now Rose could only hear their voices, as they talked, and sometimes softly laughed.

"If Aunt Rose knew, they wouldn't dare to laugh, but I wouldn't *dare* tell her. She'd never believe it if I did. She knows I'm truthful, but she'd think I *must* be mistaken."

Again the street door opened. Someone hurried along the upper hall, and down the stairway.

Rose knew that Aunt Rose had returned, and Miss Glendon had hastened to tell her version of the unfinished lesson, and of her tears.

She knew that she would not be fairly treated; that Miss Glendon would surely repeat that she had been obstinate, and that she had been made unfit for study by the visit and the party.

"The lovely visit, and the party didn't hurt me," she whispered. "It was finding no one waiting to see me when I came home, and then Miss Glendon cross the very first thing!"

It was as she thought.

Miss Glendon had a long talk with Aunt Rose, but as it was near lunch time

Rose was not sent for to be reasoned with.

Instead, the maid called her to lunch.

"I don't want any lunch," said Rose, "my head aches so it makes me feel sick, and I'd rather lie down in my own room."

Norah had always liked Rose.

She had heard a part of what Miss Glendon had said, and she sympathized wholly with the little girl.

"Sure, I'd think ye'd 'nough rather be up here in yer own pretty room, than down there wid,—but I'll not be saying anything ag'in' yer teacher. Will I bring ye something ter eat, or drink? Or maybe, ye'd like Dorcas ter come up a while, an' bathe yer pretty head."

"Oh, Norah, you're always good," said Rose, "but I'd rather not have anything to eat. I want to lie down, and perhaps I'll feel better this afternoon."

Norah went downstairs, and told the cook that she feared that little Rose was sick.

“It’s the work er that sour-faced Miss Glendon,” declared Norah, “and I don’t wonder the poor child has an aching head. It makes mine ache to look at her, an’ her not caring ter be kind ter the best child that ever lived.”

In her excitement Norah had rendered her meaning obscure, but the cook appeared to understand it, and at once began to lament over the lack of wisdom that had caused Aunt Rose to choose so unlovely a person for a governess for little Rose.

Aunt Rose, sure that the child must be told how very naughty she had been, went softly upstairs to the pretty chamber, but paused on the threshold.

Rose lay upon the bed, sound asleep, her arm pushed up under her brown curls, and half hidden by them. Her cheeks were flushed, and while Aunt Rose stood looking at her, a sigh escaped her red lips.

She looked smaller than she really was lying there, and for a moment, a wave of pity swept over the woman, but she quickly repulsed it.

"I must be firm with her," she whispered, "and she must become used to obeying her teachers, whoever they may be."

She turned from the doorway and went downstairs.

"I'll let her sleep now," she thought, "but when she wakes, I'll talk with her."

Rose was really very tired, and the unpleasant morning had increased her weariness.

For a long time after Norah had left

her, she had lain, with wide-open eyes, thinking, thinking, and hoping that Aunt Rose would not try to talk with her until her headache was gone.

After a while she had become drowsy, and then she had fallen asleep.

And how heavily she had slept!

It was late when she woke, and a flash of light outside the chamber door told her that Norah had lighted the great electro-lier in the hall.

"It must be near time for dinner," thought Rose.

As if in answer to her thoughts, Norah again appeared in the doorway.

"Are ye feelin' better?" she asked, "fer if ye are, I'm ter help ye slip inter a finer frock, an' tie a fresh ribbon on yer curls. Ye know yer aunt is pertic'lar 'bout dressin' fer dinner."

"I know," said Rose, "and my head doesn't ache so badly now, so I'll go down."

"Will ye put on the new light *turkey* blue frock?" asked Norah.

"Oh, Norah, it's *turquoise* blue," said Rose. "Yes, I'll wear that."

"Well I axed yer, because that ol' Perfesser Danton is comin' ter dinner, an' yer aunt wants yer ter look fine."

Rose felt little interest in the old man who talked upon subjects that she could not understand, and which she never felt quite sure Aunt Rose did.

CHAPTER XI

OUT IN THE RAIN

TRUE to her promise to Miss Glendon, Aunt Rose had talked with her little niece, and while she surely did not scold, she did speak very firmly.

“But truly I wasn’t naughty, or obstinate,” Rose had said, “and she wouldn’t have thought so if she had cared for me. She doesn’t like little girls, I know she doesn’t. Get me a teacher who *does* like little girls, and I’ll work, oh, so hard on my lessons!”

Aunt Rose had looked coldly at her, for a moment, then she said;

“I wholly approve of your governess.

She is firm and sincere. I chose her from several persons who applied for a position, and I could not think of letting another take her place, simply to gratify a child's whim. You will feel differently toward her, after a time."

"And I don't want to sing. I *can't* sing!" cried Rose.

"There has never been an Atherton who could not sing acceptably," said Aunt Rose, "and I wish you to be accomplished."

"But Mr. Ashton says I have no voice for singing, and he laughs at me, and I don't like it!"

Aunt Rose looked amazed.

"Mr. Theophilus Ashton is a very correct person, and a fine teacher. You were a foolish child to fancy that he laughed at you," she said. "You really must become used to your teachers."

The week that followed was far from pleasant.

Rose tried to keep her mind upon her lessons, but she found it hard to do so, and Miss Glendon, knowing that Aunt Rose approved of her, was even more stern than before.

Friday morning had been more unpleasant than usual, and Rose wondered if the hours set for study would ever end.

At last lunch was announced, and she drew a long breath of relief. She felt that she was free until the next morning.

It was a mild, sunny day for early spring, and she ran out onto the lawn, and along the terrace, enjoying the fresh breeze.

She hoped that Lester Jenks would see her, and come over for a chat.

“Lester is always amusing,” she

thought, "but I *do* hope Evangeline won't be with him."

There was no one in sight, but over beyond the hedge and the summerhouse she could hear voices, and she listened.

Yes, that was Lester. What was he saying?

A moment later she knew that he was talking to Evangeline.

His voice rose higher, and the breeze carried his words so that she heard them, plainly.

"You needn't write any old poetry 'bout me!" he cried.

Rose could not hear Evangeline's reply, but again Lester spoke, even louder than before.

"Yes, you *did*!" he cried, in evident anger. "You wrote all about me, and what I did to your old cat.

"S'posen' I did put tar in the horse-chestnut shells, and jam them onto his old paws, and send him clattering down the back stairs! They were *our* back stairs, weren't they? And the cat wasn't hurt. Well, all I've got to say, is what I said first about your poetry. You *needn't* write any about me, for I won't stand it. No fellow would!"

Again Evangeline spoke, but Rose did not hear what she said, but she could guess, by Lester's reply.

"Yes, I'm going over to Rose Atherton's but you can't come with me unless you'll leave your old poetry book at home. What?

"Well, then if you *must* have it with you, just sit on this terrace, and write a poem about yourself. *You* might enjoy it, but *I* wouldn't."

Then whistling gayly, he ran across the lawn, and passed through an opening in the hedge.

"Oh, hello!" he cried, "I didn't know you were out here. I was coming over to ask you if your aunt would let you go for a ride with mamma and me. Mamma sent me to ask you. Do you think you could go with us? I *do* wish you could."

"Oh, wait here a minute," said Rose, "though I guess you'd *better* come with me while I ask her. You can tell her your mamma asked it, and then, perhaps, she'll say 'yes.'"

The two children hurried to the great doorway, and, as it chanced to be open, they ran in, and up the stairway to the living-room where Aunt Rose usually sat reading.

She looked up, a bit surprised at their

sudden entrance, and laying down the book that she had been reading, waited to learn why they had come.

"Please, Miss Atherton, mamma sent me to ask if Rose might drive with us this afternoon?" said Lester.

"Oh, *may* I?" Rose asked eagerly.

Aunt Rose, her finger shut between the leaves of the book, looked for a moment at the two eager faces.

"I think not, Lester," she said quietly, "pleasures seem to overexcite Rose, and interfere with her lessons for the next day. You may take my thanks to your mother for the invitation, but Rose must really be kept very quiet."

"Oh, Aunt Rose!" cried Rose. "It's the *quiet* here that's making me feel so badly. I'm sure I need *something* bright."

“Why, my dear, I’m surprised to hear you rebel. I’m sure that shows that you are greatly in need of quiet. You are too excited. No Atherton ever—”

But Rose had rushed from the room, out into the hall, and up to her own little chamber, her eyes filled with tears.

She could not stop to speak to Lester. She knew if she did, she would surely cry, and Aunt Rose could not bear tears.

She felt that the ride would have been delightful.

She liked Mrs. Jenks, and Lester was always bright and full of fun.

Oh, it was really a disappointment, and hardest of all, she knew that Aunt Rose, who had deprived her of the pleasure, was calmly continuing the reading of her book.

Aunt Rose Atherton did not realize that she was unkind, nor was she able to see

that she was making Rose very unhappy.

She was a good woman, and she believed that she was doing the best thing that could be done for Rose.

There are many excellent people who do not understand children, and Aunt Rose was surely one of these.

The afternoon dragged slowly, and dinner was a dull affair, only to-night it seemed duller than usual.

Aunt Lois pleaded a headache, and did not come down to the table.

Aunt Rose, whose mind was fully occupied with plans that had been submitted to her for the building of a conservatory, could think of little else, and actually forgot to talk, so Rose, who felt little like talking, ate her dinner in silence.

The butler served them, and cast pity-

ing glances toward the pretty child who sat, in solemn state, opposite Aunt Rose, and tried to eat the food that he served her, for which she felt no appetite.

Soon after dinner she pleaded that she was tired, and Aunt Rose felt sure that she needed rest, and let her go to her room.

Rose felt that she was not sleepy, but in the quiet of her own room she soon fell asleep.

She was awakened later, by voices in the hall.

Who was it?

Aunt Rose was speaking, and had evidently been talking for some time, for Rose heard her say:

“Now that is the story, and her teachers agree with me. I am sure that I am pursuing the right course with her.”

“And I am equally sure that you are

not! The very fact that a teacher will come to you telling tales about the child is enough to tell me that she is not the kind of woman to be her instructor.

“As to depriving her of all pleasures! Why, that, in itself is enough to drive her nearly wild!

“This house is lonely, and she would better be at school with other children of her own age. She needs playmates.”

“I am convinced that you would let her run wild. A man does not understand children,” Aunt Rose replied.

“I am convinced that you are making her anything but happy, and I shall take the matter into my own hands.

“Good night.”

The door closed, and Rose, lest her aunt might come up the stairway, crept back into bed.

She had listened only because she knew that the voice was dear Uncle John's, and she had actually wondered if he had come to take her away from the Atherton house.

She was almost happy now, for, although he had not taken her with him to-night, she believed, by the manner in which he had spoken, that he would soon, in some way, manage to help her to be with him.

She had longed to call to him, but Aunt Rose would have thought that most improper.

She would have, also, reproved her for listening.

"Who could help listening to Uncle John's pleasant voice?" she whispered.

She was soon asleep, and dreaming of sailing on sunlit seas in the beautiful yacht, *The Dolphin*, and Uncle John,

beside her, was calling her his dear little girl.

At breakfast Aunt Rose wondered at her smiling face, and decided that her long night's sleep had worked wonders.

Rose dared not say that she knew that Uncle John had called, because Aunt Rose had, of course, supposed that she was sound asleep.

For days Rose listened whenever anyone called, and always a feeling of disappointment came over her, when she heard the voice of the guest, and knew that it was not Uncle John's.

One week, two weeks, three weeks dragged along, and still no word from Uncle John!

She woke one morning feeling that she could not wait much longer to see him.

She knew, by what she had heard him say to Aunt Rose, that he knew and understood how unhappy she must be. What kept him away?

It was Saturday, and she wondered if it was to be a pleasant day.

She dressed, and then drew the shade, and looked out. The sky was overcast, and a strong breeze was blowing the clouds swiftly toward the west.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed. "It isn't going to be sunny, but then, I wasn't going anywhere. Aunt Rose won't let me. She says I feel better when I have no pleasures but I know better. I'm so lonesome, and it is so dull and gloomy here, I'm wild to be somewhere else.

"When I lived with Aunt Judith at the little cottage, I had to wear shabby clothes, and Aunt Judith did not love me,

but I had Polly, dear Princess Polly, and oh, what good times we had!

"Now I live in a fine house, and have beautiful clothes. Aunt Rose is always saying that I must be dressed as finely as any Rose Atherton that has ever been in the family, but I've no good times now, 'cause I'm always lonesome."

She leaned against the window frame, and looked up at the cloudy sky.

"In my dream, I was with Uncle John," she whispered, "but now I'm awake, I'm just here, and he,—oh, if he doesn't come soon, what *shall* I do?"

At breakfast Aunt Rose noticed her sad face, and questioned her.

"Oh, I'm not sick," said Rose, "but it's such a gloomy day, and, oh, Aunt Rose, you don't like to hear me say it, but I *do*, oh, I *do need* someone to play with."

Tears sprang to her eyes as she spoke, and she clasped and unclasped her little hands nervously.

“Well, well, it is certainly a dull day,” Aunt Rose replied, “and I’ll see if I can plan to have it occupied in some way.”

A ray of hope crept into the child’s heart, and she was pleased that Aunt Rose was interested to plan for her.

She was still in the dining-room, after breakfast, looking at a beautiful new fern that had just been placed near the window, when Aunt Rose returned.

“I’ve spoken to Miss Glendon about your loneliness this dull morning, and she has agreed to instruct you *every* Saturday morning. Before this there have been no lessons, save your music lesson on Saturday, and that left you not knowing what to do with your time. Run right along

with her now. She's waiting in the hall.

"You'll not notice the cloudy sky when you are busy with your arithmetic."

It was the last straw!

To study, and be with Miss Glendon on Saturdays! Saturdays, when other children were at play!

She went up to the schoolroom followed by the governess, and without a word, sat down at her little desk.

Her red lips were tightly set.

She had not spoken, because there was nothing that she wished to say, but there was something that she could *do*, and,—she was going to do it!

She would finish the morning's lessons, and then—

She bent closer over her book, and with pencil and paper, worked with a will to do the problems.

"I can do them this *one* morning," she whispered.

She worked thoughtfully, and soon passed her paper to Miss Glendon, sure that the problems were all correctly solved.

Miss Glendon was surprised. She wondered what had so awakened the child's interest in lessons that had always bored her.

She gave the paper back to Rose.

"Your work is correct," she said, "and I could give you other problems to work out, but I have an appointment that I ought to keep, so if you can amuse yourself until lunch time, I'll excuse you, and go over to the station. I have to take the train to the next town, and I must hurry. Your Aunt Rose and your Aunt Lois are talking over the plans for the new con-

servatory, and the draftsman is with them, so you'd best not disturb them."

"I *won't*," said Rose, and she waited until she heard the street door close after the governess.

Then, after listening for a moment, she ran to her room, hastily drew her raincoat on over her pretty frock, found her little pocketbook, and, on tiptoe going down the stairs, opened the great door, and was out, before even a servant had seen her.

The butler had been busy giving the cook some of his own ideas about house-keeping that he thought valuable, and he had not heard the door open, or close.

Down the driveway she flew, fear giving wings to her feet.

How her little heart beat!

Had they seen her? Would someone call her back?



Amy Brooks.

"The wind blew her cloak about her."

She ran until she was forced to stop to rest.

She glanced hastily over her shoulder.

No one was following her.

She looked up at the lowering sky. A raindrop fell upon her cheek, and she began again to run.

The big raindrop was followed by another, and yet another, and then, without any warning, down came the shower that the heavy clouds had foretold.

A raw wind had risen, and swirling around a corner, blew her cloak about her, and hustled her along, as if she had been but a dry leaf.

A sudden feeling of loneliness came over her, and something made her throat ache. Was it the loneliness or fear that made her run yet faster?

"Never mind," she whispered, as if to

comfort her little self; "it can't be very far to Uncle John's."

Down one street, and up another she ran, until at last she stood on the platform at the station.

She peeped in at the door of the waiting-room. There was no one there.

Miss Glendon must have been on her train, and perhaps was already at the town where she had an appointment.

"I don't have to ask which train will be the right one to take, because Uncle John said once that *all* the trains stopped at Cliffmore," she whispered softly to herself.

It did not occur to Rose that she should buy a ticket. She was thinking only that in, oh, such a little while, she would be clasped in Uncle John's strong arms, and that *never* again would she have to live

in the great lonely Atherton house, or be forced to be with Miss Glendon.

There were no passengers waiting in the station, or on the platform, and Rose wished that the train would come. She hoped that while she waited, no persons who knew her would see her, and be able to tell Aunt Rose where they had seen her.

A faint whistle made her turn, and look up the track.

"There it is! There it is!" she cried with delight in her voice. "And soon, *soon*, I'll be safely on my way to Uncle John."

CHAPTER XII

A LITTLE TRAVELER

HER cheeks were burning, and her eyes very bright as she ran up the steps to the platform.

There were few passengers in the car, and nearly all were men, but near the door sat a stout, motherly looking woman, and Rose sat down opposite her.

She heard the brakeman at the rear door shouting.

“This car express to—”

The name of the place was lost in noise of escaping steam, the shrieking whistle of another passing train, and the clatter of wheels once more in motion, but it must

have been "Cliffmore" she thought, because what little she had heard, had sounded like it.

How it flew over the rails!

She thought it must be a short car ride, because in Uncle John's big automobile, it had taken but little time to get them to his lovely home, "The Cliffs."

The woman opposite watched her closely, and thought her a very small girl to be traveling alone.

Rose did not know that she was being watched.

She was looking out at the rain-drenched landscape, and wondering how soon she would see the shore.

"It's all country now," she thought, "but soon we'll be riding along where there'll be no trees, and no gardens, but just long, flat beach, instead."

On sped the train, swaying as it flew around a curve of the road, and still little Rose looked from the window, straining her eyes to catch the first glimpse of the shore.

"If it wasn't so rainy, I could see better," she thought, then a moment later she whispered softly;

"But if we'd really reached the shore I truly could see it, even through the rain."

After what seemed to be a very long time since she had boarded the train, the conductor came through the car, and paused at her seat for her ticket.

"Oh, I never thought to get a ticket," she cried, "but I can pay my fare."

With nervous haste, she took her little pocketbook from her raincoat pocket, and offered the conductor a dollar.

To her surprise, he did not take the bill,

but stooped, and looked sharply into her face.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To Cliffmore!" said Rose, "and here's the money."

"Why, little girl, we're miles from Cliffmore, and going farther away from it every minute!"

She stared at him for a second in utter amazement. Then as the full meaning of his words dawned upon her, her eyes grew wide, and terror drove the color from her cheeks.

She could not speak. Her lips moved, but not a sound escaped them.

The big conductor laid his broad hand pityingly on her shoulder.

"Don't look so frightened, little girl," he said, "for I guess we can take you back to Avondale. I saw you get on there."

"Oh, but I don't *want* to go back!" she cried. "I was going to Uncle John's. He's the only person who loves me."

The big man looked the sympathy that he felt. He had a little girl of his own, and it flitted through his mind that *his* little girl had her father, mother, and brothers who loved her dearly.

This lovely child whose dark eyes looked up into his, had only an uncle who loved her, and she had tried to go to him, but had boarded the wrong train, and was fast being carried miles away from him.

"See here, little lady," he said, "you must be running away!"

Her cheeks blushed very red, and her sweet eyes grew more troubled.

"But I *can't* go back!" she cried, a sob in her voice, "for my aunt that I've lived with doesn't love me, and the uncle I'm

going to *does*, so, *some way*, I must go to him!"

"Well, well, don't worry," the conductor said, kindly, "perhaps we can fix it, although I must say, I don't see just how. You'll have to go a good many miles farther, because this train doesn't stop until we reach Westfield."

"What *shall* I do?" cried Rose, and out came her tiny handkerchief, and down fell the tears. In despair she hid her face, and cried as if her little heart would break.

Would the big conductor make her get off at the first stopping place, or would he decide that she *must* go back to Avondale?

She shivered. Aunt Rose had given her a fine home, but she had never been loving. What would she do to the child who had run away from her?

And all this time the stout, motherly

looking woman who sat opposite Rose, had watched her with kindly interest.

"I tell you what it is," she said to the conductor. "A child like that can't be put off the train, and left, in the storm, in a town where she's a stranger. I've two little girls of my own, and I'd not like to have them wandering about in a strange place. This child, it's easy ter see, belongs ter fine folks, but we're respectable people, and we live on a farm. Now I'll take her home with me, and me 'n my husband will take care of her, 'til we kin get word to her uncle ter come fer her."

"I guess that's the best that we could do," said the conductor. "I know you and your husband by sight, and you're all right. Cheer up, little girl, this good woman will look out for you, 'til you're safe with your uncle."

Rose looked up into the face of the woman who had befriended her.

It was the face of a hard-working woman, but it seemed a kindly face, as well, and the child offered both her hands, in sudden relief.

"Take me with you!" she cried. "I'm so afraid to be out in the storm alone, and I want to find Uncle John."

"Bless your heart! I couldn't go home with an easy mind if I knew I left you on the train, not knowing which way to turn, or worse yet, standing at the station, out in the rain. This train stops at Westfield, and at North Westfield. That's where I live, and when we git there, you come right along with me. My husband will be at the station with the wagon, and 'fore you know it, you'll be safe under the farmhouse roof."

"Oh, Uncle John could thank you better than I can," cried Rose, smiling now, although her lashes were still wet with tears.

The train stopped at Westfield, and nearly every passenger left the car. Then on it sped, through the driving rain, going, Rose thought, even faster than before.

"Is it much farther?" she asked, looking up at the woman who was peering out at the drenched landscape.

"The train is slowing down now," she replied, "and I'll take this big bag, if you'll take the little one."

Rose did not see the conductor when she stepped down upon the platform, and the woman, although very stout, walked so swiftly along toward the station, that Rose nearly lost her breath in trying to keep up.

The "wagon," as she had termed it, stood waiting at the rear of the station.

A heavily built man, with sandy hair peeping out from under an old hat-brim, shouted, "G-lang! *Whaow!* Will ye?" to the bony old horse that seemed to understand his command, for she took three antic steps forward in response to his sharp "G'lang!" and immediately came to a standstill, in answer to his "Whaow!"

"Hello!" he cried, when he saw the two coming toward him. "Hev ye brung comp'ny with ye, Dorindy?"

"Hold this ambrill' while me an' this little girl gits in," she replied, sharply, "and when we git in out er this downpour, I'll explain."

The man was evidently used to doing as he was told, for, without a word, he

meekly held the umbrella, and soon, a silent trio, they were driving over the muddy country road, the "wagon" rattling outrageously all the way.

Rose had thought that the woman had a good face, and she had gone with her trustingly, climbing to a seat beside her, and, feeling glad to be in someone's care.

It was when they turned into a narrow country road, bordered on each side by tall trees that met overhead, that a sudden fear came over her, and she felt her lips grow cold.

"I'm going off with these people, and, oh, I don't know *who* they are, or *where* they are taking me!" she thought.

At the old Atherton house excitement reigned.

For hours Aunt Rose and Aunt Lois had

discussed plans for the new conservatory, and the draftsman had made alterations here, and offered suggestions there, until the two ladies believed that they had planned the finest conservatory that had ever been designed.

After the draftsman had left, Aunt Rose went in search of her little niece.

Not finding her anywhere in the house, she called the maid.

Norah had not seen her, neither had the cook, and the butler, well knowing that he had been spending his time talking with the cook, insisted that Rose must be somewhere in the house.

Long search failed to find her, and Norah offered to run over to the Jenks' house, and learn if she were there.

She returned at once saying that Rose had not been there, nor had she been seen

by any member of the family. Aunt Rose was puzzled.

She knew that Rose never went to any other house, and so could not imagine where she was.

The child's absence seemed strange, but she was not really anxious until the storm descended in all its fury, when she was not only anxious, but frightened.

It was fast growing dark, and the little girl had not yet been found.

"She has not yet returned, Lois," Aunt Rose said to her sister, "and when I say it, I don't know what I mean, for how can anyone return, who has not yet been out."

"But if the house has been carefully searched," Aunt Lois said gently, "it seems reasonable to think that she is somewhere else."

"Where *could* she be in this storm?"

Aunt Rose asked, to which Aunt Lois responded:

“Where, indeed?”

No one slept at the Atherton house that night, and on the next morning the butler, showing plainly how little he had rested, asked permission to search the neighborhood yet more carefully.

Aunt Rose was only too glad to agree, but an hour later the man returned with the statement that he had not found Rose, and that no one whom he had met had seen her.

“What shall I do next?” he asked, and Aunt Rose, who prided herself on being equal to any emergency, was forced to admit that she could not think what should be done.

“I must write to John, tell him all about it, and ask him to help in the search for

Rose," she said, and by the next mail the letter sped on its way to Uncle John.

It cost Aunt Rose an effort to write it.

She was very proud, and John Atherton had openly disapproved of her method of training the child.

He had even declared that no little girl could be happy living as Rose lived.

At first she believed that Rose had tired of being alone while the draftsman had been showing his plans, and had run out of doors for a change from the great shadowy rooms, rendered darker than usual because of heavy clouds that had made everything seem dreary.

Now, she felt almost sure that Rose, little Rose had actually run away!

It was no time for pride to be considered, and she had begged John Atherton to come at once.

“He will receive my letter this afternoon, and will be here this evening,” she said, and there was comfort in the thought that her brother, although so many years younger than herself, would be able, and eager to aid her.

It happened, however, that John Atherton was away from home, and he had given his housekeeper permission to close the house, and during his absence, visit her sister who lived in an adjoining town.

Thus the letter, dropped into the letter-box at his door, lay unopened, awaiting his return.

Aunt Rose could not understand why he did not reply, and telephoned.

Then she sent a telegram.

She now had two causes for very great anxiety.

Rose, for whose safety she feared, and

her brother John, who always answered promptly.

“Where could a child go, and no one in the house, or the neighborhood see her depart?”

Over and over Aunt Rose asked this question, but no one could give a satisfactory reply.

“And where could John be, where has he ever been, that he would not answer me?”

Avondale had never looked more beautiful. Since the storm, everything appeared fresh and fair, the sky looked a brighter blue, and wherever the warm sun lay, the little grass blades were springing.

“Soon there’ll be wild-flowers!” cried Princess Polly, “and then, in just no time, it’ll be summer!”

"Oh, it is lovely to-day," agreed Lena Lindsey, "but I guess it'll be some time longer before it's really summer, tho' I'll tell you one thing; the pussy-willows are out!"

"Oh, Lena, where did you see them?" cried Polly, her eyes shining like stars.

"Come, and I'll show you, and we'll bring some home. My mamma likes them, and yours will too," said Lena.

Away they ran, laughing gayly as the merry breeze tried to snatch their hats.

They found plenty of the pretty "pus-sies," and when each had gathered a fine handful, they turned toward the avenue, chattering gayly all the way.

"I tell you truly, there isn't a worse acting child in school than Gwen Harcourt," said Lena, "and yesterday, when she walked along home with me, she said

she meant to act worse, and worse, so that teacher might have to say she mustn't come to school any more. Would you think she'd want to be sent away from the school?"

"Why, I wouldn't think anyone would," said Polly, "and if she's any naughtier than she has been, she'll be just a little nuisance."

"Rob says she's that now," said Lena, with a laugh, "and he says if they ever make Gyp come to school, it'll be hard to tell which is the worst, Gwen or Gyp!"

"Isn't it queer?" said Polly. "Gwen doesn't like to go to school, and has to, and Rose would like to go to school, and they won't let her."

"Well, Rose Atherton is sweet, and I know you wish, just as I do, that she could be here in our school with us, and—"

Lena did not finish the sentence, for just as they reached her house, Rob came running after her shouting:

“Lena! Lena! The maid has been looking everywhere for you. Aunt Rita is at the house, and she’s going soon, so you’ll have to hurry, or you’ll have only time enough to say ‘Good-by.’ ”

It was always a delight to see lovely Aunt Rita, and promising to call for Polly the next morning, on her way to school, Lena hurried up the driveway, followed by Rob.

Princess Polly ran along the avenue, in at her own driveway, and up toward the piazza.

It was then that she saw Rose’s Aunt Judith, talking with Mrs. Sherwood, as if she had been calling, and was just about to leave.

“Where could she be? I surely have not heard from her for weeks. I know I cannot sleep to-night, nor, indeed, any night, until I know where little Rose is, and that she’s safe.”

Polly heard her mother’s gentle voice replying, as if in an effort to comfort Aunt Judith, but she did not hear what she said.

The sudden fear that filled her loving little heart made her cheeks pale, as she flew past Aunt Judith to where Mrs. Sherwood still stood in the doorway.

“Oh, mamma!” she cried. “What *is* it about Rose? Is she lost? Oh, *is* she, and how was she lost?”

“Polly, my dear little girl,” Mrs. Sherwood said, as she drew her closer, “we will not say she is lost, until there has been more time for a careful search. I did not intend to tell you of this until I could

know all about it, because I knew that it would make you unhappy, but you came up the driveway just in time to hear what her Aunt Judith said."

Polly looked up at her with eyes that told how dearly she loved Rose, and although she was not crying, there were tears on her lashes.

"We must try to think that soon we may hear that Rose is safe, and that her Uncle John Atherton has arranged to have her with him.

"I have something pleasant for you to think of while we wait to hear from Rose.

"Your father and Mr. Atherton have become fast friends, and we have engaged a lovely house for the summer, that is very near to Mr. Atherton's villa, 'The Cliffs.'

"Now, if Rose is there, think what a lovely summer it will be."

“Oh, mamma! I *must* try to think of that until we hear from her,” cried Polly, smiling brightly through her tears, “and the first moment we do hear from her, I’ll write to her, and tell her that we are to be little neighbors for the summer.”

Those who have learned to love Princess Polly, and would like to meet her again, and who are eager, as she was, to hear from Rose, may hear more about the two little friends, in

“PRINCESS POLLY BY THE SEA.”

